

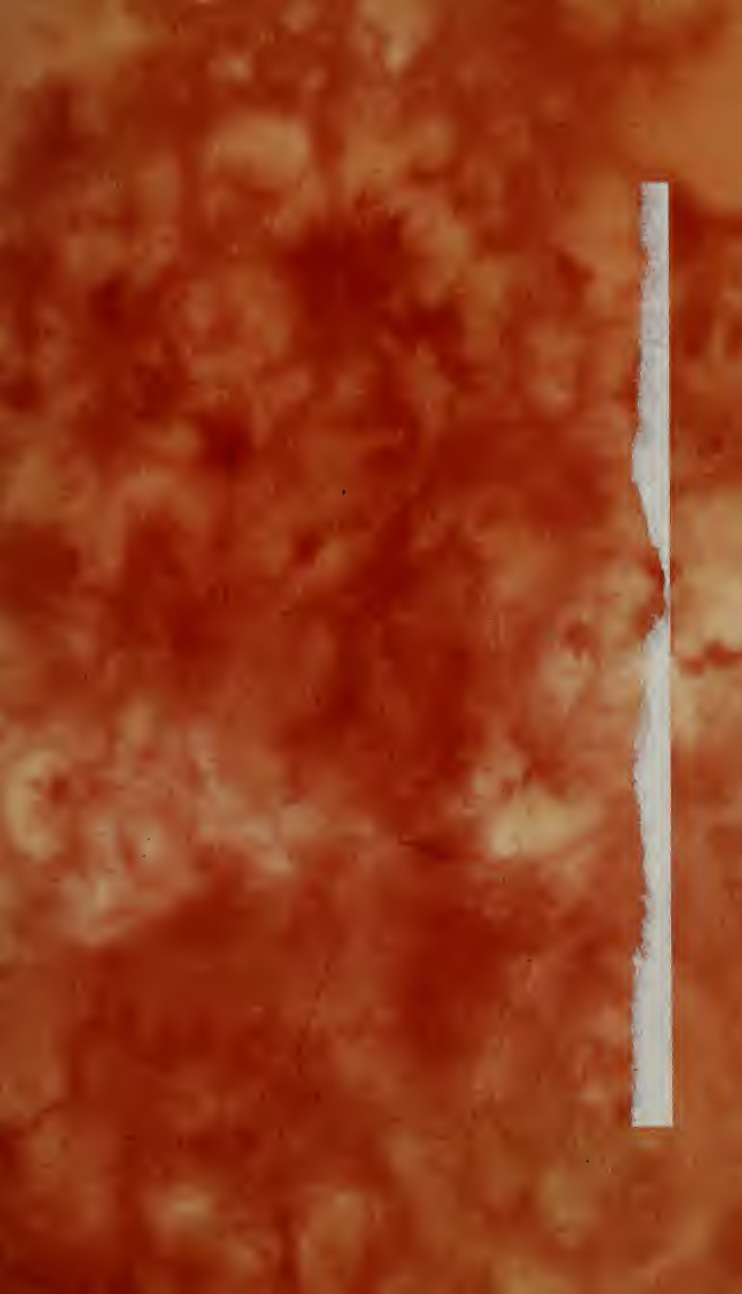




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A T T I L A.

A Romance.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "THE GIPSY," "MARY OF BURGUNDY,"
"ONE IN A THOUSAND," &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMAN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW

1837.

823
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TO

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR, ESQ.

THIS BOOK,

AS A FEEBLE TESTIMONY

OF STRONG PERSONAL REGARD, AND

SINCERE ADMIRATION,

IS DEDICATED

BY

HIS FRIEND,

G. P. R. JAMES.

dublin 1 mar 50

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN giving this book to the public, I have but little to explain. The reader who takes it up may expect to find something respecting the Princess Honoria. He will, however, find nothing. All that we know of her history is uninteresting, except to those who love to dwell upon the pruriencies of a degraded state of society: all that we know of her character is disgusting to such as love purity and dignity of mind. It would be tedious to the reader to explain, why the author has thought fit to alter several names of the persons acting prominent parts in the story of Attila. In so doing he has consulted principally his own ear; and in a few other deviations which he has made from the course of that great monarch's

history, he has consulted his own convenience. In regard, however, to the change which he has represented as taking place in the demeanour of Attila, his abandonment of the simple habits which at first distinguished him, and his dereliction from the calm equanimity which he displayed in his early intercourse with the Romans, the author believes that he is justified by the records of history, as well as the course of nature. He is inclined to think, also, that if, in regard to the facts of Attila's death, we could display the chameleon truth, in the broad light of day, without any of the shades and hues with which time and circumstances have surrounded her, we should find her colour such as he has represented it ; but this, of course, must ever remain in doubt.

ATTILA.

CHAPTER I.

A LANDSCAPE IN DALMATIA.

MUSIC was in the air, and loveliness was spread out over the earth as a mantle.

There was a voice of many waters,—the bland musical tone of mountain streams singing as they wend their way over the smooth round pebbles of their hilly bed towards the sea. And the song of life, too, was heard from every field, and every glade, and every valley; the trilling of innumerable birds, the hum of insect myriads, the lowing of distant cattle, winding down from the uplands to pen or fold, the plaintive subdued bleating of the patient sheep, the merry voice of the light-hearted herd as he led home his flock from the hills, after a long warm southern day in the maturity of spring. Manifold sweet sounds,—all blended into one happy harmony, softened by distance, rendered

more melodious to the heart by associations felt but not defined, and made more touching by the soft evening hour, — filled the whole air, and spread a calm, bright contemplative charm over the listening senses.

The eye, too, could find the same delights as the ear, equal in depth, similar in character ; for though sweet April had sunk in the warm arms of May, still, even in that land of the bright south, the reign of summer had not yet begun : not a leaf, not a flower, not a blade of grass, had lost a hue under the beams of the sun, and many a balmy and refreshing shower, during a long and humid spring, had nourished the verdure and enlivened the bloom.

From the high round knoll upon the left, crowned with the five tall cypresses, which, perhaps, flourished as seedlings on that spot in the young and palmy days of Greece, might be seen that unrivalled view which has never yet found eye to gaze on it uncharmed, — that view which, of all prospects in the world, has greatest power, when suddenly beheld, to make the heart beat fast, and the breath come thick with mingled feelings of wonder and

delight. On one side, at about a mile's distance, where the ground sloped gently down towards the sea, rose the palace of Diocletian, vast and extensive, massy without being heavy, and equally sublime from its beauty and its dimensions. Clear, upon the bright background of the evening sky, cut the graceful lines of the architecture; and, though a sudden break in the outline of the frieze, with the massy form of a fallen capital rolled forward before the steps of the magnificent portico which fronted the sea, told that the busy, unceasing, unsparing hand of man's great enemy had already laid upon that splendid building the crumbling touch of ruin, yet as it then stood, with the setting sun behind it, and the deep blue shadows of the evening involving all the minute parts of the side that met the eye, the effects of decay even added to the beauty of the object, by making the straight lines of the architecture at once contrast and harmonise with the graceful irregularities of nature whereby it was surrounded. Several groups of old and stately trees, too, still more diversified

the prospect on that side; and through the pillars of the portico might be caught the distant glistening line of the bright sea where it met and mingled with the sky.

Behind, and to the right hand, stretching far away to the north, rose mountain upon mountain, in all the fanciful forms and positions into which those earth-born giants cast themselves in Greece, and over them all was thrown that lustrous purple which in those lands well deserves the name of the “magic light of evening.”

Between the knoll of cypresses, however, and those far hills, robed in their golden splendour, lay a wide track of country gently sloping upwards in a thousand sweeping lines, with here and there an abrupt rock or insulated mound suddenly towering above the rest, while scattered clumps of tall old trees, rich rounded masses of forest, villas, farms, vineyards, and olive grounds, filled up the intervening space; and had all been as it seemed,—had all those farms been tenanted, had none of those villas been in ruins,—would have presented a scene of prosperity such as the world has never known but once.

Still decay had made no very great progress;

still the land was richly cultivated ; still the population, though not dense, was sufficient ; and as the eye ran along the innumerable little promontories and head lands of the bay, might be seen, rising up above some slight irregularities of the ground, a part of the buildings of the small but prosperous town of Salona. Close by the side of that knoll of cypresses, breaking impetuously from a bank above, dashed on the bright and sparkling Hyader ; now fretting and foaming with the large rocks amidst which a part of its course was bound ; now prattling playfully with the motley pebbles which in other parts strewed its bed ; now dashing like a fierce steed all in foam where it leaped over the crag into the sunshine ; and then, where its clear blue waters spread out uninterrupted under the cool shadow of a hill, seeming — like time to a young and happy heart — to stand still in calm and peaceful enjoyment, even while it was flowing away as quickly as ever.

The eye that followed the Hyader down its course — and there was an eye that did

so — rested on the bright and glowing west, and on the fairest, the most entrancing object of all that magic scene : for there, stretched out beneath the setting sun, lay the gleaming waters of the Adriatic, studded all along its shores with a thousand purple islands which rose out of that golden sea like gems.

The air was calm and tranquil ; the sky, the unrivalled deep blue sky which hangs over that most lovely sea, was without a cloud, varying with one soft and equable declension from the intense purple of the zenith to the warm rosy hues that glowed in the far west. The sea, also, was smooth and peaceful, and would have seemed unbroken by a wave, had not here and there a sudden bending line of light darted over the bosom of the waters, and told that they were moved in the evening light by the breath of the breeze.

Thus appeared the whole scene, when, from the opposite side of the bay, a white sail was seen to glide forward as if coming from Salona towards the palace of Diocletian, or the little village of Aspalathus. Slowly and peacefully it moved along, giving one more image of calm and

tranquil enjoyment ; and while it steered upon its way, four sweet voices, sometimes joined in chorus by several deeper tones, broke forth from the mound of cypresses, singing, —

A HYMN TO THE SETTING SUN.

I.

“ Slow, slow, mighty wanderer, sink to thy rest,
 Thy course of beneficence done ;
 As glorious go down to thy Thetis’ warm breas
 As when thy bright race was begun.
 For all thou hast done,
 Since thy rising, oh, Sun !
 May thou and thy Maker be blest !

Thou hast scatter’d the night from thy broad golden way,
 Thou hast given us thy light through a long happy day,
 Thou hast roused up the birds, thou hast waken’d the flowers,
 To chant on thy path, and to perfume the hours —
 Then slow, mighty wanderer, sink to thy rest,
 And rise again beautiful, blessing, and blest !

II.

“ Slow, slow, mighty wanderer, sink to thy rest,
 Yet pause but a moment to shed
 One warm look of love on the earth’s dewy breast,
 Ere the starr’d curtain fall round thy bed,
 And to promise the time,
 When, awaking sublime,
 Thou shalt rush all refresh’d from thy rest.

Warm hopes drop like dews from thy life-giving hand,
Teaching hearts closed in darkness like flowers to expand;
Dreams wake into joys when first touch'd by thy light,
As glow the dim waves of the sea at thy sight —

Then slow, mighty wanderer, sink to thy rest,
And rise again beautiful, blessing, and blest !

III.

“ Slow, slow, mighty wanderer, sink to thy rest,
Prolonging the sweet evening hour ;
Then robe again soon in the morn's golden vest,
To go forth in thy beauty and power.

Yet pause on thy way,
To the full height of day,
For thy rising and setting are blest !

When thou com'st after darkness to gladden our eyes,
Or departest in glory, in glory to rise,
May hope and may prayer still be woke by thy rays,
And thy going be mark'd by thanksgiving and praise !* —
Then slow, mighty wanderer, sink to thy rest,
And rise again beautiful, blessing, and blest !”

* It may not, perhaps, be unnecessary to remind the reader that Christianity, though established in both the eastern and western empires, was still far from universal; and even in the minds of its most enthusiastic votaries was strangely mingled with the picturesque superstitions of a former creed; so that the same man was often a Christian in belief, who was pagan in many of his habits and almost all his familiar expressions.

CHAP. II.

THE ACTORS IN THE SCENE.

THE voices that sung were sweet, thrillingly sweet, and the music to which the verse was wedded of that dreamy, wandering kind which approaches more nearly to the tones of an Æolian harp, than to any regular composition. It was, indeed, full of a wild and delicious melody, which was sometimes solemn and sublime, sometimes low and plaintive, and the same general theme might be heard running through the whole; but often the air wandered wide, like a bird upon the wing, and caught a note or two of a gladder or more joyous character, which brightened the general solemnity of the strain, like hope breaking in upon a life of grief. Music had not then reached that perfection which it has since attained; but there was a touching beauty in its fresh simplicity which is now but seldom found. It possessed

the free unfettered charms of a graceful nature, cultivated, but not stiffened, by art, and it still went hand in hand with the sister spirit of poetry, in the land where both had birth.

But the hymn which had just floated on the air derived peculiar sweetness from the fine harmony of the voices which sung it. It seemed the varied tones of one family, where each knew every note in the voice of the other, and modulated his own to suit it, with that spirit of love in the breasts of all, whereof the sweetest harmony that art can compose, is but the musical image. In the chorus, however, there joined less cultivated singers; but, nevertheless, the voices were generally fine, and there was an enthusiastic eagerness on the tongues that repeated —

“Then slow, mighty wanderer, sink to thy rest,
And rise again beautiful, blessing, and blest!”

which spoke of that happiness under the bright sun that was then sinking slowly to the breast of ocean, which is the poetry and melody of life.

Under the five tall cypresses, and partly re-

clining on the bank that sloped to the bright Hyader, sat the group from which those sounds proceeded. It was separated, indeed, into two distinct parts ; for—with a very short space of green turf between them and those they served—lay stretched out in various attitudes, some raising the head upon the hand, some reclining the chest upon the folded arms, some supported on the elbow, eight or nine slaves of both sexes.

There was nothing, however, in the countenances of any there which spoke of the bitterness of slavery. There were no signs in their faces or their demeanour, of the iron entering into their soul ; and though, perhaps, no portion of human nature is originally so debased, and no condition of bondage can be rendered so gentle, that the chain will not gall, and the load will not oppress, yet the lot was then common, and the accursed name of slave comprehended nearly if not fully one half of the earth's denizens. In the faces of those who lay stretched easily but not intrusively beside those to whom they were bound by that inhuman tie, there might be traced a line of care,—perhaps a shade, it might

be, of melancholy,—gathered by long preserved and fruitless remembrances of scenes, and objects, and persons far away ; and on none, but the countenance of one white-teethed Nubian girl, and a young glad boy, whose life was in the present hour, and to whose mind the past and the future were but a vapoury cloud, was seen the light and laughing merriment of a heart which has known no sorrows in the past. With all the rest, contentment with their lot seemed chastened by griefs experienced and gone by. They could smile, they could sing, when occasion called for mirth. Their minds were not irresponsive to sights or sounds of joy ; but with them it was from the well, not the fountain, that the sweet waters of enjoyment sprung : they sparkled not up spontaneously, but required to be drawn forth by the hand of another.

Yet if one, remembering their bondage, turned to gaze upon the group near which they sat, the condition of their feelings was easily understood ; for the forms and faces that were there—not in the outward lineaments alone, but in the beaming forth of the divine spirit, as much ex-

pressed in the air and movements of the whole body as in the heart's interpreter, the face — told that the task-masters were of that kindly nobility of soul, which, in after years, won for a whole class (that did not always merit the distinction) that most expressive name of *gentle*.

Under the cypresses, not exactly where the shade fell, — for the sun near the horizon had lost his meridian heat, and the western breeze swept over the cool bright waters of the Adriatic, — were seated three women, and a boy of some fourteen years of age. They were evidently of the highest race of the land in which they lived; and had nothing else bespoken their rank, the broad deep border of purple, of triple die, which edged the snowy robe of the eldest of the party, would have distinguished her as a Roman lady of patrician blood. She was scarcely beyond the middle age; and time had treated her beauty leniently. Somewhat of the elastic grace, and all the slight pliant outline of early youth, was gone, but in contour and dignity much, too, had been gained; and the eye, more calm and fixed, was as bright and

lustrous, the teeth as white and perfect, as ever. The hair, drawn up and knotted on the crown of the head, was still full and luxuriant: but, meandering through its dark and wavy masses, might here and there be seen a line of silver grey; while the cheek, which had once been as warm and glowing as the morning dawn of her own radiant land, sorrows calmly borne, but not the less deeply felt, had rendered as pale as the twilight of the evening just ere night reigns supreme.

Her dress was plain and unadorned, of the finest materials and the purest hues; but the gems and ornaments then so common were altogether absent. The consciousness of beauty, which she might once have felt, was now altogether forgotten; its vanity she had never known. As much grace as health, perfect symmetry of form, and noble education from infancy, could give, she displayed in every movement; but it was the calm and matronly grace, where all is ease, and tranquillity, and self-possession. The same placid charm reigned in the expression of her countenance. She seemed to look with benevo-

lence on all. Nay, more, as if the sorrows which had reached her in her high station had taught her that in every bosom, however well concealed, there is, or will be, some store of grief, some memory, some regret, some disappointment, there mingled with the gentleness of her aspect an expression of pity, or, perhaps, its better name were sympathy, which existed really within, and formed a tie between her heart and that of every other human thing.

She was, indeed, to use the beautiful words of the poet, "kind as the sun's bless'd influence."* Yet the bright dark eye, the proud arching lip, and the expansive nostrils, seemed to speak of a nature originally less calm, of days when the spirit was less subdued. Time and grief, however, are mighty tamers of the most lion-like heart; and it was with that look of pity, mingling with tender pleasure, that she gazed down upon a beautiful girl, of, perhaps, thirteen years of age, who, leaning fondly on her knees, as the hymn concluded, looked up in her face

* Cowley.

for sympathetic feelings, while the sweet sounds still trembled on her full rosy lips.

Between the matron and the girl there was little resemblance, except inasmuch as each was beautiful; and though the lineaments perhaps, regarded as mere lines, took, in some degree, the same general form, yet there were too many shades of difference to admit the idea that those two fair beings stood in the dear relationship of mother and child, although the fond, relying, clinging affection displayed in the looks of the younger, and the tender anxiety of the matron's smile, as she gazed down upon her companion's face, argued affections no less strong between them than such a tie might have produced.

Eudochia — for so was the younger called — offered a lovely specimen of that sort of beauty which, however rare in Italy even now, when the native blood of the children of the land has been mingled with that of many of the fair-haired nations of the North, we find from the writings of Petronius to have been not uncommon in his days. Her hair was of a light brown, with a golden gleam upon it,

as if, wherever it bent in its rich wavy curls, it caught and shone in the bright rays of the sun. Her eyes were of a soft hazel, though the long sweeping black lashes made them look darker than they were : but her skin was of that brilliant fairness which did indeed exceed the

“ *Expolitum ebur indicum ;*”

and the rose glowed through it on the cheeks, as pure and clear as in those lands where the veiled sun shines most soft and tenderly. Her features were, indeed, more Greek than Roman ; but her complexion spoke, and not untruly, of a mixture in her veins of what was then called Barbarian blood by the proud children of the empire. Her mother had been the daughter of a German prince in alliance with Rome ; but the Romans of that day had learned to envy the noble Paulinus his success with the beautiful child of the wealthy and powerful Barbarian chief. Too short a time, indeed, had their union lasted ; for though Eudochia had drawn her first nourishment from her mother’s bosom, yet, six months after her birth, the fair wife of

Paulinus had left him to mourn her death with two motherless children. He had continued to hold her memory in solitary affection, filling up, as is so common with man, the vacant place left by love in the shrine of his heart with the darker and sterner form of ambition ; and while he led forward his son Theodore in the same path, he left his daughter on the Dalmatian shore, with one whose kindred blood and generous nature insured to the fair girl all a mother's tenderness and a mother's care. For her alone the lips of Eudochia had learned to pronounce those sweetest of words, *my mother*, — for her alone had her heart learned to feel the thrill of filial love.

The affection, however, of the Lady Flavia, for so was called the elder of whom we have spoken, was divided. For the love of man, woman has but one place in her heart, but maternal tenderness has many ; and the agony of Niobe was not less for every child that died than if she had had but one. Flavia looked upon Eudochia as her child, and loved her as such ; but the two others, of whom we have said that group was composed, were in reality her children.

Ammian, the boy, was like his mother in features and complexion, but not in character. More of his dead father's nature had descended to him, more of the wild and daring spirit which, sporting with perils and dangers, contemning pain, and laughing at fear, found food for a bright and eager imagination in scenes and circumstances which, to others, were full of nothing but horror and dismay. His pastime, as a boy, was to climb the mountains, and spring from rock to rock across the yawning chasms; to stand gazing down over the dizzy side of the precipice, and to drink in the sublimity of the scene below; to dash through the wild waves, when the south-west wind rolled them in mountains on the shore, or to mingle with the pagan inhabitants, which still filled many of the villages near, and to watch without taking part in those sacrifices which were prohibited under pain of death by the Christian emperors, but which often took place even in the open face of day. His mother put no check upon his hazardous pleasures, for she was Roman enough to wish that her children might never know the name of fear. But yet her heart sometimes sunk

with a chilly dread when she witnessed his wild exploits: for though the qualities which prompted them were those for which she had loved his father, yet she could not forget that the same daring spirit had led that father to death, by barbarian hands, in the wilds of Pannonia.

There was one more in the group under the cypresses, and one that must not be passed over in silence. She, like Eudochia, was reclining by her mother's side; but had the great Florentine sought two lovely models from which to depict night and day, none could have been found equal to these two beautiful girls. Ildica*, however, was fully two years older than Eudochia, and those two years made a great difference. Eudochia was a child; Ildica was no longer so. Eudochia was the violet, but Ildica was the rose. Her form, too, spoke

* The learned reader will perceive, that I have changed the last syllable of this name, for the sake of a more regular feminine termination than the original gives, in sound at least, to an English ear. Let me acknowledge at once, also, that I have followed the same bold plan throughout, changing every thing that did not suit my purpose.

it; youth was in every trace: but there was the rounded contour, the graceful sweeping lines, which tell that nature's brightest effort to produce beauty is full and complete. She was at that age when the causeless blush comes frequent, and the unbidding sigh is first known; when the cheek will sometimes glow as if with shame at the innocent consciousness of loveliness; and her heart tells woman that she was created for others. Through the transparent cheek of the Dalmatian girl the eloquent blood played apparent at every word, and the long lustrous deep black eyes, the very eyelids of which seemed flooded with light, spoke of feelings within that snowy bosom which were yet to acquire intensity and fire. And yet Ildica fancied herself still a child. So gradual, so calm, had as yet been the transition, as their years passed away in that remote spot without any of the cares, the turmoils, the passions, and the follies of courts and of cities breaking the tranquil current of their days, that she hardly knew the two years which had effected so great a change in her being had passed otherwise

than in infancy. She had never very eagerly sought the light sports and pastimes of Eudochia, and others of the happy age: she had always shown a disposition to meditation and to feeling. It was not that she wanted cheerfulness; far from it: but it was, that through her very gaiety was seen a train of deeper thought. There was a character of greater intensity in all she did than is usual in early youth. She loved music, she loved poetry, she loved every art; and her mother saw her own mind reflected in that of her daughter, with a shade, perhaps, of more passionate energy derived from the character of her father.

Thus sat they by the bright stream of the Hyader, whose clear water served to mingle with the wine of their light evening meal, enjoying, with sweet tranquillity of heart, the loveliness of a scene which, remembered from his earliest days, had lured Diocletian thither, some century before, from all the charms of power and empire, to spend his latter hours in a remote province, and a private station. Simple as that meal was, consisting of

nothing but light cakes of a fine flour, with some dried fruits and some early strawberries, it was more delicious to those who ate it, in that fair scene and that happy hour, than all the innumerable dishes of a Roman supper. Still there seemed something wanting; for—as the last stanza of the hymn was sung, and Eudochia lay reclining on the Lady Flavia's lap, and gazing up in her expressive face—the eyes of Ildica had followed the course of the Hyader down towards the sea, and rested with a longing, anxious look upon the boat that, with slow and easy motion, as the light but steady wind impelled it over the waters, steered onward, for some time, towards that part of the bay near which stood the little village of Aspalathus, a sort of appendage to the palace of Diocletian. Ammian, her brother, had remarked it too, and watched it also; but in a few minutes its course was changed, and its prow turned towards one of the islands. Ildica said not a word, but she bent down her eyes on the grass, and plucked one of the purple crocuses which checkered the green whereon she sat.

“He will not come to-day,” said her brother, as if quite sure that the same thoughts were in his bosom and his sister’s at that moment; “and, besides, he would not appear in a solitary boat like that. Ten such boats would not have held the gorgeous train which followed him when he came last year to take Theodore away.”

“But remember, Ammian, my son,” said Flavia, smiling at the eager looks of her two children, “remember, when last he came, our cousin Paulinus was sent to Dalmatia on the Emperor’s service, as count of the Offices, and now he comes but as a private man to see his daughter. He is not one of those degraded Romans who in the present day never travel without an army of domestics. See, the boat has changed its course again. It did but bear up against the current of wind between the islands. Eudochia, my sweet child, it is perhaps your father after all.”

As she spoke, the boat, catching the favourable breeze, came more rapidly towards the land, and in a moment after was hidden from

their eyes by the wavy ground which lay between them and the Adriatic. "Run, Aspar, run," cried Flavia to one of the slaves; "run and see where the boat lands. Shall we return homeward, Eudochia? we may meet him sooner."

Ildica exclaimed, "Oh yes!" but Eudochia and Ammian reminded their mother that they had promised to meet Paulinus on the spot where they had parted from him, even where they then sat; and, while they waited in the heart-beating moments of expectation, the light-footed slave again appeared upon the upland, which he had cleared like a hunted deer, and stood waving his hand, as if to tell that their hopes were verified.

For a moment or two he paused, looking back towards the sea, and then, running forward to the cypresses, he said, "Yes, lady, yes! they have reached the shore, and are coming hither. I saw them spring from the boat to the landing place of the palace; and while several ran up towards the portico bearing baggage, four took the path between the

rocks which leads up hither by the field of Eusebius the gardener."

"Was my brother there, good Aspar?" cried Eudochia, eagerly; "was my brother there, too?"

"I could not distinguish, sweet one," replied the slave; "the distance was too long for my sight, and the sun was directly in my eyes; but the one that came first was slight in form, and seemed more like your brother than the Count Paulinus himself. There was the lightness of youth, too, in his step, as he bounded up over the rocks like a fawn towards its doe!"

Flavia smiled, and Ildica smiled too; but as she did so there was a slight, a very slight, change of colour in her cheek. It grew paler; but it was not the paleness of either apprehension or disappointment: it only spoke of some intense feelings busy at her heart, though what they were, she herself knew not. At that moment the slave exclaimed, "Lo, lo! he comes!" and all eyes were turned towards the upland.

CHAP. III.

THE MEETING.

THE lower edge of the sun's broad golden disk touched, or seemed to touch, the rippling waters of the Adriatic, and sea and sky were all in one general glow, when the form of the expected guest rose over the slope, and, with joyful arms outstretched towards the group under the cypresses, he appeared clear and defined upon the bright expanse behind him. The figure was that of a youth of eighteen or nineteen years of age, tall for his time of life, and of that form which promises great after strength. As he stood there, indeed, with his figure partly concealed by the mantle which fell from his shoulders, and with the smooth features, the unfurrowed brow, and beardless chin of youth, turned from the searching rays of the sun, one might have attributed to him many more years

than he had in reality numbered; but there was the bounding joy of boyhood still in his steps, as, followed by three persons, amongst whom the eye of Flavia sought in vain for Paulinus, he sprang across the sloping ground to meet so many that he loved. To Flavia his first salute was given in the warm, the touching, the affectionate kiss of filial love; calling her, as he did so, by the tender name which his heart always willingly granted to her who had watched his infancy and formed his boyhood, "My mother!" His next glance was, certainly, to Ildica, but his words and his embrace were given, first, to his sister Eudochia, and then even to Ammian, whom he also called "his brother."

The words, however, were few, and the embrace short, ere he turned to Ildica, and took her hand. But his aspect was for a moment timid and uncertain, as if he knew not well in what words and what manner he was to greet her. Her eye, however, was full of light; her lip smiled with the irrepressible spirit of joy; her breath seemed to come short with some thrilling emotion in her bosom; and Theodore,

growing bolder as her hand touched his, drew her, too, to his arms, and pressed a warmer kiss upon her lips. To her he would not say “*My sister!*” though he began those words which he had so often used towards her; but he stopped short, and his lips murmured, “*My — my Ildica!*”

If any one marked the agitation of either of those two young and happy beings, it was amongst the slaves; for Eudochia and Ammian had no eyes as yet for the slighter indications of the heart’s inmost feelings; and Flavia, without any other observation, asked, eagerly, “*But where is Paulinus? Where is your father, Theodore.*”

“*Alas, my mother,*” replied the youth, “*he has been disappointed, and would not make me a sharer therein. Obligated to go into Cappadocia by the Emperor’s commands, he proceeds from Cesarea to escort the Empress Eudoxia to Jerusalem. But he has promised, if fate be propitious, to join us all here on his return. He would not let me bear him company; but having given me the charge of some slight busi-*

ness at Salona, left me to hasten hither, and wait his coming."

"Let us return homeward, then, Theodore," said the matron, "and you shall tell us all the news wherewith your young and ever active mind is loaded. I am sure you have not yet learned, my son, to value all the things of the world according to their real lightness, and to suffer what the idle multitude call great events to pass you by as matters which have been acted over and over again a thousand times already, and to be enacted still a million times more in the ages yet to come. Heaven forbid that you should have acquired, since you left us, such sorrowful wisdom! though your father writes to me that you have become a man, whereas you left us a boy. But you linger as if you would fain stay here."

"I ordered the boat to come round hither," replied the youth, "when I found you were all here; and I would willingly gaze again upon all these lovely things. I have beheld many lands, dear Ildica," he added, turning naturally towards her with whom his heart held the nearest

communion,—“ I have beheld many lands since I left you all on this very spot; Athens, the city of Constantine, Ida, and Olympus. My feet have even trodden Tempe; and yet there is no scene so beautiful to my eyes as that lovely sea, with Bratia, and Bubua, and Olyntha, rising like living sapphires from its golden bosom, and those grand Autariatian hills, leading up the soul’s flight to heaven.”

Without further question, they all once more laid themselves down upon the turf; feeling that Theodore would gladly see the sun set in that spot with which so many memories of early happiness were associated; and for a few minutes they left him in silence to enjoy the delight of his return. He gazed round the prospect; and it was easy to see that it was not alone the loveliness that his eye rested on which busied his thoughts, but that remembrance was eagerly unclasping with her fairy touch the golden casket of the past, and displaying, one by one, the treasured and gemlike memories of many joyful hours. As he gazed, the last effulgent spot of the sun’s orb sunk below the

sea; and he turned his look upon Ildica, on whose hand his own had accidentally fallen. Her eyes were full of liquid light; and her cheek was glowing as warmly as that sky from which the sun had just departed.

“And now, Theodore,” said Flavia, with a smile, “tell us what tidings you bring; and first, before one word of the wide public news, say, what of your father? How is he in health? how faes he at the court? Is he as much loved as ever?”

“I had forgotten,” replied Theodore, “in the joy of coming back,—in the dreamlike and scarcely certain feeling of being here once more amongst you all,—I had forgotten every thing else. Paulinus is well, my mother; and his favour with the Emperor and Empress higher than ever, though he is not loved by Chrysapheus; but he fears him not.—Here, Zeno!” he continued, addressing one of the servants who had followed him, and who had now mingled with the slaves of Flavia,—“give me the case which I bade you bring;” and from a richly chased silver casket, which the slave laid

beside him, he drew forth a string of large and perfect pearls. "These, Eudochia," he said, throwing them over his sister's neck, "these from the Empress, for her god-daughter; and this," he added, taking the rich collar of emeralds which lay below,—“and this from my father, Paulinus, for his dear Ildica. Many were the messages of love,” he continued, as he placed the splendid present sent by his father in the hand of the beautiful girl whom it was to adorn, and, with the playfulness of boyhood not yet passed away, twined, smiling, the links of emeralds round her arm,—“Many were the messages of love my father bade me give to all; and to you, my mother, I bear this letter: but let me be the first to tell you that your possession of the palace is confirmed by the Emperor, and that the estates withheld from you by an unjust judge are restored.”

“Thank you, my son, thank you,” replied Flavia, opening the thread with which the letter was bound round; “but this light is too faint to enable me to decipher your father’s epistle. Let us to the boat, my Theodore, and

so homeward ; for I long to learn more of what has passed at Byzantium, and the twilight is every moment getting a greyer hue."

The youth lingered no longer, but rose with all the rest ; and while Flavia, talking to Ammian, who often looked behind, led the way over the upland and down the path towards the sea, Theodore followed, at some little distance, with Eudochia clinging to his left arm, and with his right hand clasping that of Ildica. As they went wandering onward through the sweet smelling copses of myrtle, which sheltered the grounds of a neighbouring garden from the east wind, Eudochia asked a thousand questions of her brother, and marvelled much that he had grown so tall and strong in the short absence of nine months. Ildica said not a word ; but she listened to the tones of his voice as he replied to his sister ; she felt the touch of his hand as it held hers ; she saw the brother of her love — the more than brother — returned from a far distance and a long absence ; and a new happiness, that she had never known before, filled her heart with emotions too intense for speech. Did she know what she felt ? did she

investigate the nature of the busy tumultuous sensations that then possessed her bosom? Neither! the absence of one with whom she had dwelt in affection from her infancy had, indeed, taught her that there were strange feelings in her heart, different from any that she had ever experienced before: but, oh! sweet and happy skill of woman, she had closed her eyes against all investigation of what those feelings were, lest she should find any thing mingling with them which might render them less blessed. It was not for her to discover for herself that which was reserved for another to explain.

The considerate slaves lingered somewhat farther still behind, caring for the cups and vessels which had served the evening meal, and listening with the wondering ears of hermits to the news brought by their fellows from the capital of the Eastern world. Much, too, had those slaves to tell of all the splendid scenes which were hourly taking place in Constantinople, and the high favour and honour of their master, Paulinus, at the imperial court. Each

feeling his importance increased by the honours and virtues of his lord, exalted in no measured terms the power and dignity of Paulinus ; and to have heard the praises of his menials, one might have believed that he excelled in learning and in talents the greatest men of literature's most golden days, and rivalled in the field the most renowned warriors of either Greece or Rome. One thing, at all events, was to be gathered from their discourse, and to be received without abatement ; which was, that he possessed the great and happy talent of making himself loved by those who served him. Such, indeed, was his character ; dignified, but not haughty, to his equals ; respectful, but not slavish, to his superiors, he had always a kindly word or a warm smile to give to those whom fortune had placed beneath him. He did not court popularity ; and the vulgar gratulations of the circus would have been offensive to his ear : but to a menial or to a woman he at once unbent the calm and philosophic reserve of his demeanour for the time of their temporary communication ; and, with a gleam of kindly

warmth, he cheered all those who approached him, as weaker or less fortunate than himself. Such a tribute is due to a man whose innocence even was not his friend, and who awakened jealousies even while he strove to disarm them.

Speaking thus of their well loved lord, the slaves followed slowly till they approached the shore; and then, running forward to make up for their tardiness by momentary alacrity, they officiously aided the boatmen to push the boat close up to some grey rocks, which, shining through the clear blue water for many a foot below the ripple that checkered the surface, afforded a sort of natural pier for the party to embark. Flavia and her companions took their seats in the stern, and six or seven of the slaves placed themselves in the bow, the rest proceeding along the shore towards the palace. Ammian, leaning over the side in his fanciful mood, gazed down upon the small waves as they were dashed from the path of the boat; and then, catching a rippling gleam of yellow light tinging the crest of one of those tiny billows, he looked up to the heavens, where, just in that

spot of deep sky towards which the streamer of the aplustrum turned, calm, and large, and bright, rose Hesperus above the world. He gazed upon it for several minutes with a look of rapt enjoyment, as if for the time he had forgotten every thing in the universe but that one bright solitary star. Ildica had hitherto sat between her mother and Theodore, listening in silence to the brief and broken tales of his late travels which he was telling ; but as a pause ensued, she fixed her eyes upon Ammian, and watched him with a soft smile, as if she knew what was passing in his thoughts, and waited to see what turn the fancy would take. From time to time her eyes appealed to Theodore, and then turned again to her brother, till at length her sweet musical voice, speaking her pure native tongue, but slightly touched and softened by the Greek accent, was heard breaking the momentary silence which had fallen upon them all.

“ Sing it, Ammian,” she said, speaking to his unuttered thoughts, “ sing it ! Theodore will hear it well pleased. It is my mother’s

poetry, written since you left us, Theodore :
sing it, Ammian !”

The boy looked up into his sister's eyes with a gay smile, and then poured suddenly forth in song a voice clear and melodious as her own. The first two stanzas he sung alone ; but at the end of the second, and of each that succeeded, all those who knew the music took up the first as a chorus, sending sweet harmony over the twilight waters, while the rowers with their oars kept time to his

SONG TO THE EVENING STAR.

1.

Hesperus ! Hesperus ! in thy bright hand
Bearing thy torch, lit at day's parting beams,
Shed thy sweet influence o'er our dear land,
Soothe thou our slumbers, and brighten our dreams.

2.

Hesperus ! Hesperus ! each closing flower
Yields thee the sigh of her odorous breath,
Thine, too, the nightingale's musical hour,
Thine be the offering of song and of wreath.
Hesperus ! Hesperus ! &c.

3.

Hesperus! Hesperus! holding thy way
 Lone, but serene, 'twixt the day and the night,
 Guide all our hearts with the same even sway,
 Soften each sorrow and calm each delight.
 Hesperus! Hesperus! &c.

4.

Hesperus! Hesperus! star of repose!
 Herald of rest to the labours of day!
 Through worlds and through ages, where'er thy light glows,
 Honour and thanks shall attend on thy ray.
 Hesperus! Hesperus! &c.

CHAP. IV.

THE YOUNG LOVERS.

IT was more than an hour after the boat had reached the landing place, and, fatigued with a long, bright, happy day, Ammian and Eudochia had sought the repose of hearts at ease; while Flavia, sitting with her daughter and Theodore in the small chamber near the great Corinthian hall in the palace of Diocletian, busied herself with manifold questions in regard to those friends of other years, in Constantinople and in Rome, from whom she had voluntarily separated herself, in order to lead her children up to years of free agency, at a distance from the luxury and corruption of either great metropolis. The anecdotes which he had to relate, the little traits and rumours which he had collected, concerning those whom she had once loved dearly, seemed of greater interest to the Lady Flavia than even the news of more personal importance which he told her. Yet that

news imported that the cession of a portion of Illyria by Valentinian to Theodosius, was completely defined, — that the dwelling in which she had found a home, by the interest of Paulinus, was now fully transferred from the monarch of the West, who had shown a strong disposition to despoil her of her lands in distant provinces, to the chief of the Eastern empire, who, on the contrary, had hitherto given her kindly aid and protection ; and that her possession of that sweet spot, near which many of the estates of her dead husband lay, was confirmed to her by the hand of Theodosius himself.

The lamp had been placed at her right hand, in order that she might peruse the letter of Paulinus ; but still she had not proceeded to that task. What were the feelings which staid her, it were difficult to say ; but the open pages lay unread by her side ; and though she more than once took them up, as if to begin, she laid them down again as often, and asked some new question. At length, as the moonlight found its way through the half-drawn curtains of the door, she once more raised the letter, saying,

“Well, I will read it now,” and her eye again fixed upon the first few words.

“Notwithstanding, gentle Flavia,” so the epistle ran, “the desire I had expressed to keep hidden from my son, and our sweet Ildica, our hopes and purposes, yet feelings that I cannot well explain, but which I will now attempt to depict, have induced me, sure of your consent and approbation, to tell him, ere he left me, — perhaps for the last time, — that it was my wish and hope, if his own heart seconded my desire, that he should, in his twentieth year, choose the one we both so dearly love for his bride.”

Flavia raised her eyes to her daughter and the son of Paulinus, who had, in the occupation which had just employed her, a fair excuse for speaking in low and gentle murmurs. They had farther drawn back the curtains, and were gazing from the door upon the moonbeams which lighted up the great hall; and a bright warm smile upon the mother’s face told that her own heart took kindly part in the fond feelings which were so busy in theirs. She turned to the letter again, however, without comment,

and read on. "I am about," continued Paulinus, "to travel through the provinces, and the will of God may require that I shall never return. I know not why, but I have a sadness upon me. As the sun goes down, small objects cast long shadows; and I have fancied, that I once, and only once, beheld a cold look in the eye of the Emperor towards me, a triumphant smile on the countenance of Chrysapheus; yet, if ever omens were infallible, they would be the smiles of our enemies and the coldness of our friends. Nevertheless, let me acknowledge all my weakness,—weakness which philosophy cannot conquer, and which it were wisdom to conceal from any other eye than thine, oh, thou that hast been as a sister to my widowed heart, as a mother to my orphan children. Before any evil augury could be drawn from the looks of others, my own heart seemed to feel the coming on of fate. There has been a shadow on my spirit, an apprehension of coming evil, a sensation of neighbouring danger, such as domestic animals feel when near a lion, even without seeing it."

Flavia laid down the page, murmuring, "And is it so, Paulinus? alas, and is it so? —Go forth, my children," she added, abruptly, seeing them still standing in the doorway; "you seemed as if you longed to taste the moonlight air. Go forth! It is a grand sight to gaze upon the waters of the Adriatic from that noble portico. It expands the heart, it elevates the mind, it raises the soul to the God who made all things. Go forth, then, my children! I would willingly be alone."

They needed no second bidding; for she told them to do that which had lain as a longing at their hearts ever since she had begun to read. Not a year before, when they had last parted, they would have waited no command,—nay, no permission; but would at once, in the unconscious liberty of the young heart, have bounded forth to enjoy the scenes they loved, in the society that they loved not less,—that of each other. But a change had come over their feelings since then, rendering all their intercourse more sweet, a thousand times more sweet, but more timid also. Theodore, indeed, knew why;

for his father's parting words—the solemn sanction which Paulinus had given to his future union with Ildica, in case death should prevent a father's lips from pronouncing the blessing at their marriage feast,—had opened his eyes to the nature of his own sensations. No sooner had the few first words been uttered by Paulinus than he had felt at once that his love for Ildica was more than fraternal affection; that it was different—how different!—from that which he experienced towards Eudochia; how different from that which he entertained towards any other human being! With Ildica, the knowledge was more vague: it was more a sensation than a certainty. So long as Theodore had been with her she had gone on treating him as a brother; but with the feelings of her heart changing towards him still, as imperceptibly, but still as completely, as the green small berry changes to the purple grape, the verdant bud, to the expanded and to the yellow leaf. So long as he had been with her she had felt no alteration though it took place; but during his absence she meditated on those things long and deeply;

and on his return she met him with not less affection, but with deep and timid emotions, mingling a consciousness with her every look, which was sweet to the eye that saw it, and that wished it to be so.

Theodore raised the curtain, and Ildica passed out ; but ere she had taken two steps in that grand moonlight hall, Theodore's hand clasped hers, and he led her on through all those splendid apartments, — which have been, even in ruins, the wonder and the admiration of all after days, — to the vast colonnade, six hundred feet in length, which fronted and overlooked the beautiful Adriatic. As they passed, in the various apartments of the slaves and domestics were to be seen lights, and to be heard many a gay voice laughing ; and at the end of the principal street of the palace, for it had its streets as well as corridors, two or three groups were seen playing in the moonlight with polished pieces of bone, or with loud and vehement gesticulations disputing about their game. Theodore almost feared that the portico itself might be tenanted by some such

party; and his heart had anticipated an hour of lonely wandering with her he loved so eagerly, that he might not have brooked disappointment with old and stoical patience. That portico, however, was considered by the general inhabitants of the palace, and those also of the neighbouring village, as in some degree sacred ground. It was there that the great Emperor, after having conquered and reigned in glory through the prime of life, after having satisfied the vengeful zeal of his counsellors against the Christian sects, which now, in spite of all his persecutions, peopled the whole land, after having made his name awful by deeds of blood, not less than by deeds of magnificence, had been accustomed to sit self-stripped of his power, and to gaze out, *after having been an emperor*, upon nearly the same scene which his eyes beheld, *before he was any thing but a slave*. Although little more than a century had elapsed since the death of Diocletian, his fate and history, his acts and his character, had been strangely distorted by tradition; and though the peasantry had not learned to look upon him as a

bad man, or to execrate him as a tyrant, yet the extraordinary vicissitudes which he had hewn out for himself, the vague legends of his acts during life, and the mystery attaching to his death, surrounded his memory with a fearful awe, which held the people of the neighbourhood aloof from the spot for which he had shown such peculiar fondness, when night covered the world with her dim and fanciful shades.

The portico was vacant; happy sounds rose up from the shore, where the fishermen were lingering beside their boats; and a merry laugh, or snatches of some light song, were heard from the neighbouring village, sinking into the hearts of Ildica and Theodore with the power of a charm, waking associations of sweet domestic joy, dim and undefined, but thrilling — potent — overpowering. Oh! who can tell the many magic avenues through which all the external things of the wide universe find, at some time or other, means of communicating with the inmost heart — avenues, the gates of which are shut till, at some cabalistic word of grief or joy, or hope or fear, they suddenly fly open; and

we find in our bosom a thousand sweet and kindred fellowships, with things which had never learned to touch or agitate us before.

Glad and cheerful, yet calm, were the sounds that broke occasionally upon the listening ear of night ; and grand and solemn, but still gentle, was the scene which lay stretched beneath the risen moon ; but the sensations which were in the breasts of the two, rendered those sounds and sights a thousand fold sweeter, a thousand fold more dear ; and in return, the gay distant voices, and the calm wide moonlight sea, seemed to draw forth and render intense even to overwhelming in the souls of Theodore and Ildica,

“ Into the mighty vision passing,”

the inborn joy of all the new emotions to which that day had given life within their hearts. They paused and listened to the melody of innocent mirth, and paused and gazed upon the bright world before them. Ildica's hand trembled in that of Theodore, and her heart beat quick ; but he felt that she was his, and that she was agitated ; and with the gentleness of true affection, though without any definite plan

for sparing her, he took the very means of telling his first tale of love, so as to agitate as little as possible the young and tender being, all whose deepest feelings were given to him alone.

“ Hark ! ” he said, “ hark, dear Ildica ! how gay and sweet those merry voices sound ! Some lover come back from wandering like me, tells the glad story of his journey done to the ear of her who has watched for him in absence.”

Ildica grew more calm, and raised her eyes, too, to Theodore, not without some feeling of surprise, so different was his tone, so much more manly were his words than when they had parted. There had been, up to that moment, one thing, perhaps, wanting in her love towards him — the conscious feeling of man’s ascendancy : she had loved with passion deep, sincere, and ardent ; but she had loved as a girl, and looked upon him still as the companion of her early sports. His words and tone — the words and tone of one who had mingled with, and taken his place amongst, men — put the last rose to the wreath. She

felt that thenceforth to him she could cling for protection — to him she could turn for guidance and direction.

But Theodore went on. “Some lover,” he said, “or perhaps some husband, Ildica, returned from the labours of the day to home and happiness, and sweet domestic love! Oh, dear Ildica, since I have been away, often have I, in wandering through different provinces, lodged in the dwellings of traders in the towns, or in the cottages of shepherds and labourers in the mountains and the plains; and the most beautiful, the most blessed thing that I have ever seen has been found as often, if not oftener, in the hut of the herd or the house of the common merchant, as in the marble palaces of the Cæsars, and within the walls of imperial cities. Oh, that sweet domestic love! that blessing—that bright blessing! which, like the glorious light of the sun, shines alike on every condition, and on every state, cheering, enlivening, enlightening, all who shut it not out from their own dark hearts by vices and by crimes. Hark, hark! dear Ildica, how those gay voices seem to

chime to my words, speaking of love, and joy, and hope! Oh, Ildica, dear Ildica! may not such things be also for you and me?"

Ildica sunk down on the stone seat by which they had been standing, but she left her hand still in his, and he felt it tremble. Nor did he himself speak unmoved; for his ardent nature, and the first breaking forth of those dear and treasured thoughts, shook his whole frame, and scarcely daring to trust his lips with further words, he placed himself by her side murmuring only, "Dearest Ildica!" She answered only with a long drawn agitated sigh, and gliding his arm round her soft waist he drew her gently to his bosom.

"Oh, Theodore, is not this wrong?" she asked, but without attempting to free herself from his embrace.

"Wrong, my Ildica? wrong, my beloved?" he exclaimed; "oh, no! God forbid that I should ever seek to make you do or feel ought that is evil! No, no, dearest, my father's blessing will attend our union; he has promised,

he has given it : our dear mother's consent was spoken to him long ago !”

“ Indeed !” cried Ildica.

“ Yes, indeed,” he said, pressing her again closer to his bosom, from which she had partly raised herself as she spoke. “ Yes, indeed, Ildica ! Joyful did my father's words sound in my ear, as he told me that if I could win your love, I might hope for your hand. Nothing now is wanting to my happiness but one dear word from my Ildica's sweet lips. Oh, speak it, beloved ! Speak it ; and say you will be mine.” She could not find voice to utter the deep feelings of her heart ; but her cheek sunk glowing upon his shoulder, and their lips met in the first dear long thrilling kiss of happy and acknowledged love.

CHAP. V.

THE DISASTER.

FROM a dream of happiness such as mortal beings know but once on this side of the grave — a dream of happiness in which all the brightest, noblest, most joyful feelings of the fresh, unsullied, unexhausted heart of youth burst forth, like the streams of the Nile from a thousand beautiful sources, Ildica and Theodore woke at length, and prepared to return to the side of her mother, to make her a sharer in their joy, and tell her how blest, how supremely blest they felt. Clinging close together in attitudes of tenderness, from which Attic sculptors might have learned yet another grace; they rose and moved along the portico. They moved, however, but slowly, lingering still for some fond word, some affectionate caress, or pausing in the scene, hallowed for ever in their eyes by the first spoken

words of love, to gaze over it again and again between the colossal pillars of the portico. Over that scene, however, had by this time come a change, one of those sudden, inexplicable alterations not uncommon in southern climates. The moon, which by this time had wandered on far enough to warn them that the crowded moments had flown quickly away, was still hanging over the Adriatic, and pouring forth that glorious flood of light which makes the stars all "veil their ineffectual fires;" but the sky was no longer without clouds, and catching the light upon their rounded but not fleecy edges, the large heavy masses of electric vapour swept slow over the lower part of the sky, between the bright orb and the islands that slept beneath her beams. Theodore and Ildica paused to mark them, as slowly contorting itself into hard and struggling forms, one particular mass lay writhing upon the horizon, like some giant Titan wrestling with agony on his bed of torture. At the same time, the breeze which was balmy, though calm, during the evening, became oppressively hot, with a faint phosphoric smell in the air,

and a deep silence seemed to spread over the whole world. The cigala was still, the voices on the shore had ceased, the merry laugh no longer resounded from the open cottage door, and the nightingale, which had prolonged her song after all the rest was silent, ceased also, and left a solemn hush over the whole universe.

“What strange forms that cloud is taking,” said Theodore, called even from the thoughts of his own happiness by the sudden alteration of the scene; “and how quiet every thing is. Doubtless, there will be a storm to night. Alas! for those who are upon the treacherous sea.”

“But your father,” said Ildica; “he goes by land, Theodore. Is it not so?”

“Not so, dearest,” replied Theodore; “he visits first Antioch, and then proceeds by land; but it is not for him I fear, as I heard of his landing while I was on the journey hither; but those strange clouds and the heat of the air, must surely augur thunder to-night; and I saw a whole fleet of boats this morning at Tragurium, ready to put to sea.”

“ It is indeed warm,” said Ildica ; “ I feel almost faint with the heat. Had we lived a few centuries ago, Theodore, we might have drawn evil auguries for ourselves and for the fate of our affection from those hard clouds, and the dull and almost mournful silence which has fallen over the world.”

“ Out upon auguries, my beloved,” he replied, “ we hold a better faith, and place our trust in God, who made our hearts and formed us for each other. We will confide in him, my Ildica ; and for those who do so, signs and portents are but proofs of his power, which should strengthen, not shake our faith.”

As he spoke he turned to lead her into the palace ; but at that moment the low, sad howling of a dog broke the stillness of the night ; and a figure, the face of which was turned from the moonlight, but which Ildica at once recognized as her mother, appeared at the end of the colonnade, and advanced towards them. Ildica and Theodore hastened to meet her, and each took and kissed one of her fair hands. “ Give us your blessing, O my mother !” said the

youth ; “ we have been very happy. I have told Ildica how I love her. I have told her what hopes my father has given me ; and she has promised to share my lot and make my home joyful.”

“ Bless you, my children, bless you ! ” replied Flavia, while Ildica hid her face on her mother’s bosom, and Theodore again pressed his lips upon her hand. “ Ye are young lovers, indeed ; but still my blessing be upon you ; and oh ! may God grant that in the course of that love which is made to render us happy, you may be more fortunate than the parents of either ! Your father, Theodore, and I have both lost those we loved as fondly as you love one another ; but may better fate be yours, my children ! may you never lose each other ; but go on in the same warm affections through a long life, and death scarcely separate you, till we all meet again in heaven.”

Flavia raised her eyes towards the sky, and for a moment remained in silence, though her lips still moved. The next instant, however, she added, “ I came out to seek you, not be-

cause I thought you long absent, nor because I had any cause of fear; but I know not how or why it is I have a painful, apprehensive anxiety hangs upon me to-night which will not let me rest. Perhaps it is the sultry heat of the atmosphere; the air has grown very oppressive; even the animals seem to feel it. Your sister's dog, Theodore, would not rest in her usual place by my feet, but ran out through the curtains; and Aspar told me as I passed that it had fled to the garden. How the cattle, too, are lowing in the village stalls! Do you not hear them? Does the wind come from Bratia?"

"Nearly," replied Theodore; "but cast away melancholy, my dear mother. Oh! that Ildica and I could give you a share of our happiness!"

"You do! you do, dear youth!" replied Flavia; "I do share in your happiness; and this melancholy will pass away again. Those who have known much grief are subject to such thick coming fancies; and the first touch of deep sorrow brushes off the bloom of hope,

crushes the firm confidence of the heart, and leaves shrinking apprehension to tremble at every breath; but let us in; there is a storm coming on."

As she spoke there was a low melancholy sound came rushing over the waters of the Adriatic; the clouds, which had before past so slow and silently along, seemed now agitated by some unknown cause, and rushed in dark black volumes over the moon; while here and there, amidst the clefts and rents of their dark canopy, looked out a calm bright star. But still the mourning sound increased; and the bending branches of the olives down below told that the breath of the tempest was already felt. The next instant, ere the lovers and Flavia could escape from the colonnade, the blast of the hurricane struck the building and shook the massy structure to its foundations. Behind the shelter of a pillar the two women escaped; but Theodore, strong and active as he was, found himself dashed forward against the wall of the palace; while leaves, and flowers, and broken boughs of trees were whirled about in

the air, and strewed the marble pavement of the portico. It lasted but for a moment, however, dying away as it came, with a low moan; while a few large drops of rain followed, as if the punished demon of the storm fulfilled his allotted task of destruction with tears and with regret.

“Flavia! Ildicá! you are not hurt!” cried Theodore, springing towards them.

“No! no!” replied Flavia, “we are safe; though it was a fearful gale. But let us in, Theodore; it may return. Hark!—Good God! what is this?”

Well might she so exclaim. The wind had gone by; even its murmur had ceased; when suddenly there rose a roar from the earth as if ten thousand war chariots had met in the shock of battle. The lightning burst forth from the clouds, and flashed along amidst the innumerable dark gigantic pillars of the colonnade, lighting the whole of its vast extent with the blue and ghastly glare; the thunder rolled from the zenith to the horizon with a peal which would have deafened the ear to the loudest voice.

But the lightning flashed, and the thunder roared, scarcely seen or heard; for below, around, was a more dreadful visitation still. The earth shook beneath their feet; the pavement rose and fell like the waves of the sea; the enormous columns tottered and reeled; the walls of massive stone bent to and fro; while the roar of the earthquake and the echoing of the thunder were rendered more terrific by the crash of falling building, and the shrieks both from the interior of the palace and the more distant village. Theodore cast his arms round Ildica and her mother; and, staggering along, hurried them down the steps across the level in front of the palace, and out of danger of its shaken walls. It was the impulse of the moment which made him act and Flavia yield; but she paused ere they were many steps from the building, exclaiming, "My children! Theodore, my children!—Your sister and Ammian!—I must go back."

"And I will go too!" said Ildica, in a voice so calm that it made her lover turn suddenly to gaze upon her who seemed to have lost the

timid girl in the first moment of danger and horror.

“No! no! he exclaimed. “Dear mother, hear me! There will be a second shock doubtless, but it will be some minutes ere it comes. Hasten with Ildica beyond the golden gate and up the side of the hill out of reach of all buildings! I will seek Ammian and Eudochia, and join you in a moment. Fly, fly, dear mother! I leave in your charge what I value more than life. Save her!”

Flavia hesitated; but that moment a slave with a torch rushed out into the portico seeking them, while the motion of the ground subsided and all became still. It was the swift runner, Aspar, who came up, crying, “Fly, lady! Fly, dear mistress! the worst shock is never first; fly to the hills, fly!”

“Away with them, Aspar, beyond the golden gate,” cried Theodore, breaking from them; “I will join you instantly! Away, away!”

Thus saying, he darted from them, rushed through the portico, and crossed the side avenue, while the wild clamour from the prin-

cipal street of the palace echoed through the long halls and galleries ; and the deep darkness in which that part of the building was plunged, rendered the distant sound of wailing and of terror more frightful. On, on he went, though fragments of stone and cement obstructed his way, and crumbled under his feet, showing that even the first shock had been severe enough to shake that strong and massive fabric through every part. But Theodore still hurried forward, till at length, in his haste, as he passed the spot where he and Ildica had seen the slaves playing on the pavement, he stumbled over a large soft body, and stooping down, he felt, with horror, beneath his touch, the yet warm form of a man with the newly fallen capital of a neighbouring column lying with crushing weight upon his loins. The long hair floating on his shoulders showed Theodore that the unhappy being had been a slave ; but still the instinctive benevolence of the youthful heart made him pause a moment to ascertain if life were extinct. He spoke, but not a tone answered ; he lifted the hand, in which life's

soft warmth yet lingered; but not even a convulsive movement of the fingers told that one spark of the immortal fire still glowed in the mortal body. All was motionless, insensible, lifeless; and Theodore hurried on.

The gates of the Cyzicene hall were open; the glare of lights and the sound of voices came from within; and Theodore instantly entered, as the shortest way to the apartments occupied by Flavia and her household. Never, perhaps, did terror in all its forms present itself more awfully than in that grand and splendid chamber. There, as a general point of meeting, had collected eighty or ninety of the slaves and domestics of both sexes. Fear had not yet had time to subside; and with pale and haggard faces, livid lips, and wide anxious eyes, they remained, some clinging to the columns which had so lately been shaken like reeds; some kneeling in the midst, and uttering the confused and terrified prayer; some cast down upon the pavement in utter self-abandonment; some hiding their eyes in their garments, as if they could shut out the approaching horrors that they feared to wit-

ness ; some gazing wildly up to the roof, which they expected momentarily to fall upon them. Large fragments of the beautiful paintings which had covered the walls, were now seen dashed about upon the floor ; and a wide rent in the solid masonry over the door, showed how insecure was the shelter which those terrified beings had sought from the night of the earthquake.

In the midst stood, gathered together in the hour of danger, three dusky Numidians, with a servant from the neighbouring Pentapolis, who, in happier times, had been too near akin to the dark Africans to live with them in amity, but who now clung to them for support ; while a gigantic slave, from the Porphyry mountains, one of the few who looked the unusual dangers of the night in the face with calm determination, was seen in the front, crushing out under his large foot a torch which one of his more terrified companions had let fall. There were two or three others who stood near, and with arms folded on their chests, and dark brows full of stern resolution,

gazed towards the door, as if waiting what horror was to come next.

In the hands of some of the bolder slaves were the torches which gave light to the hall; and the moment Theodore entered, one started from the group, exclaiming, in tones of eager — ay, and affectionate inquiry — though they were but slaves, “The Lady Flavia? Where is the Lady Flavia? Where is the Lady Flavia?”

He spoke as an old servant might speak to a boy he had known from infancy; but Theodore was no longer a boy; for, the last nine months and the last few hours together, had made him a man in mind as well as in body, and he replied with that prompt tone of commanding courage which won instant obedience.

“She is safe,” he cried, gazing round him. “Up, up, all of you! Lie not there in prostrate terror, herding together like sheep beneath the lightning. Up, if you would save your lives! Up, and away! You with the torches go before them! Out beyond the golden gate you will find your mistress and Aspar. Keep close to the walls till you are in the open field! Another shock is coming, and the parapets and capitals fall

first, but fall far out from the buildings. Crowd not together so, and crush each other in the doorway!—Out, coward! would you kill your fellows to save your own miserable life? So! quietly—but speedily. You, Cremera! and you, and you, Marton, come with me! You are brave and honest, and love your lady. Snatch up whatever jewels and valuable things you see, and follow quick! Where is Eudochia? Where my brother Ammian?”

“ Her chamber is within the Lady Flavia’s!” said the Arab Cremera; and, darting through the lesser door-way, Theodore hastened thither, followed by the three he had called, and one or two others, gathering up caskets, and scrinia, and gold, and jewels, as they hurried through the more private apartments of the palace. A sound of murmuring voices was before him, as he came near the chamber of Flavia; but dashing aside the curtain, he rushed in.

Kneeling upon the floor, as she had risen from her bed in terror, with her bright hair flowing in waving lines over her shoulders, her hands clasped, and her eyes raised to heaven as her

lips trembled with prayer, was Eudochia; while beside her, fainting with terror, lay the negro girl who had sat beside the Hyader lately so gay and thoughtless. Near her stood Ammian, whose first impulse had been to seek her; but in whose dark imaginative eyes, instead of terror, shone a strange and almost sportive fire, as if his excited fancy felt a degree of pleasure even in a scene so full of danger and of horror. Nevertheless, he was eagerly entreating his fair *sister*, as he called her, to conquer her terrors, and to fly with him to seek their mother, exclaiming, "Come, come, Eudochia, you shall pray to-morrow—or to-night, if you like it better, when once you are somewhere safe. Your prayers will go to heaven in but tattered garments, if they have to force their way through yon rift in the roof. Come, come!—Oh, here is Theodore! Where are my mother and Ildica?"

"Both safe!" replied Theodore. "But this is no hour for sport, Ammian;" and, without question, he caught up his sister in his arms. "You take the casket from Cremera, Ammian!" he continued. "Let him take yon poor girl!"

Hark, there is a rushing sound ! Quick, quick, it is coming again ! On before, Ammian. On before, to the Golden Gate ! ”

Eudochia clung to his breast, and hurrying on with a step of light, he bore her through the many chambers of the building, till, turning through the great hall called the Atrium, he entered one of the transverse streets, and paused a moment to listen if the sound continued. All, however, was still and dark, except where the murmur of voices and the rush of feet was heard from a distant spot, and where a number of torches appeared gathered together near the beautiful octagonal temple of Jupiter, or where from the apartments occupied by the old and incapable conservator of the palace were seen issuing forth two or three slaves with lights, and a solitary priest bearing the consecrated vessels of the Temple, which had already been converted to a Christian church.

Onward, in the same direction, Theodore now bore the fair light form of his sister ; but ere he had reached the end of the street another awful phenomenon took place. From the midst of the intense, deep, black expanse which the sky now

presented, burst forth an immense globe of fire, lighting with a fearful splendour the gigantic masses, columns, and towers of the palace; showing the neighbouring hills and woods beyond the gates, and even displaying the heavy piles of mountains that lay towering up toward the north. No thunder accompanied the meteor; and its progress through the sky was only marked by a sound as of a strong but equal wind, till suddenly it burst and dispersed with a tremendous crash, leaving all in deeper darkness than before.

The sight had made the multitude pause and fall upon their knees before the church; and as Theodore approached he heard a voice exclaiming, "Let us die here! We may as well end our days here as in the open fields! Let us die here."

But, to his surprise, the next moment, the calm sweet tones of the Lady Flavia struck his ear, replying to the words which she had heard too. "No, my friends! no!" she said, in a voice which had now no terror in its sound, but was all calm but energetic tenderness. "No! it is our duty to God, to ourselves, to our brethren, to our children, to take

the means of safety which are at hand. Let us fly quick from amongst these buildings which another shock may cast down to crush us. There may be dangers even beyond the walls, but here are certain perils. Let us go forth ; I came back but to seek my children ! Lo, they have come in safety, and let us now depart. Oh delay not, pause not, for the hesitation of terror more often points the dart and sharpens the sword that slays us, than the rashness of courage. Come, my friends, let us come. God will protect us ; let us take the means he gives. Come, my Theodore, come. Ammian, you look as your father used to look when he went forth to battle. Should not such a face as that shame terror, my friends ? Come, I pray ye, come !”

Even as she spoke, the same hollow rushing sound was again heard ; the steps on which she stood above the rest shook beneath her, and Ammian, seizing her hand, hurried forward. Clouds of dust rose up into the air, shrieks of terror burst from the very lips that had so lately proposed to remain and die there, and every

one now rushed towards the gate. But their steps were staggering and unequal, for the solid earth was again shaken, the buildings and the columns were seen tottering and bending by the light of the torches, the crash of falling masses blended with the roar of the earthquake, part of the frieze of the temple was dashed into the midst of the group of slaves who were flying on before their mistress, and one amongst them was struck down.

“Stop!” said the voice of Flavia; “let us not leave any one we can save. Hold the torch here!” But it was in vain. The man was crushed like a trodden worm!

“God receive thy spirit to his mercy, through Christ!” cried the priest, and they rushed on, while still the earthquake seemed to roll the ground in waves beneath their feet, and their eyes grew dim and dizzy with the drunken rocking of the enormous buildings, through the midst of which they past. The gate, though not far, seemed to take an age to reach, and joyful was the heart of every one as they drew near. But just as they were about to go forth

the struggling of the feverish earth appeared to reach its height; and one of those colossal flanking towers, which seemed destined to outlast a thousand generations, swayed to and fro like a young heart sorely tempted between virtue and crime, and then fell overthrown, with a sound like thunder, across the very path of the fugitives. It left a chasm where it had stood, however; and through that rugged breach the terrified multitude took their way, stumbling and falling over the convulsed and quivering masses of stone.

Glad, glad were all bosoms when those walls were passed; and though still the ground heaved beneath their feet, though the roar continued, and the very trees were heard to crack and shiver as they passed along, yet all felt that some hope of safety was gained; though when they looked around, and saw the black and tangible darkness that covered the whole earth, and hid every object except that on which the occasional torchlight fell — when they gazed, I say, into that dull and vacant unreplying blank, and heard the hollow roaring

voice of the earthquake around, below, above, well might their hearts still sink, and well might many a one amongst them think that the predicted day of general dissolution had at length arrived.

Still carrying his sister in his arms, Theodore had followed Flavia and Ammian through the broken walls; and it was not till their feet trod the more secure ground beyond, that he asked, "Where is Ildica, my mother?"

"Here at hand, upon the hill, my noble Theodore," she answered. "Eudochia now is safe," she added; "leave her with me, and give our dear Ildica tidings of our escape, for she promised not to quit the spot where I left her till my return. Yon faint spot of light upon the old tumulus, — that is Aspar's torch."

Theodore placed his sister on her feet beside Flavia, and hurried on. He had no light with him; the heavens and the earth were all in darkness, and the roar of the last shock still rang, though more faintly, in the air. Yet, ere he had arrived within the feeble and indis-

tinct glare of the slave's torch, the quickened ear of love and apprehension had caught the sound, and recognised the tread of his coming feet ; and in a moment Ildica was in his arms, and her fair face buried on his throbbing bosom.*

* In "The Story of Azimantium," which I published about six years ago in Blackwood's Magazine, and which has since been republished in "The Desultory Man," I gave very nearly the same account of this great earthquake with that here given. The actors and the scene are different ; but the principal facts, being founded on historical truth, are the same.

CHAP. VI.

THE EVIL TIDINGS.

THE horrors of that night had not yet ended; for from the third hour after sunset till day had fully dawned, the fever of the earth raged with unabated fury. A melancholy and a ghastly group was it that soon crowned the hill where Flavia had left her daughter, when at length all those who had escaped with her from the palace were collected together round the torches. Not one half of those, indeed, who dwelt in the magnificent building to which that earthquake gave the first severe blow, had assembled in the train of the Roman lady; but during the pause of nearly an hour, which succeeded the second shock, many pale and terrified beings, some wounded and bruised with the falling masses, some nearly deprived of reason by their fears, wandered up from the palace and the neighbouring village, guided by the lights upon the

hill, and with wild exclamations and bemoanings of their fate added something to the horrors of the moment.

Gradually the brief-spoken or almost silent awe subsided during that long interval of calm ; and many who had been waiting with sinking hearts for the coming of a third shock began to talk together in low whispers, and even to fancy that the hour of peril had passed by. Gradually, too, serving to encourage such thoughts, the clouds rolled away ; the stars looked out calm and bright, and the moon was seen just sinking into the Adriatic, but with a red and angry glow over her face, in general so calm and mild. Hope began to waken once again in all bosoms ; and one more rash than the rest, a fisherman from Aspalathus, ventured down the hill, declaring that he would go and see what had befallen his boat.

The minutes seemed hours ; but very few had elapsed, after his departure, ere the fierce rushing sound of the destroyer was again heard ; again the earth reeled and shook, and yawned and heaved up, and burst like bubbles from a

seething caldron, and lightning, without a cloud, played round the hills and over the waves. The terrified multitude clung together, and the sick faintness of despair seemed to defy all augmentation, when the voice of the fisherman was heard exclaiming, as he hastened back up the hill, "Fly farther, to the mountains! fly farther up! the sea is rising over the land; the boats are driven into the market-place; the palace will soon be covered! Fly farther, and fly quickly, if you would save your lives!"

"Why should we fly?" cried the same voice which had before urged the multitude to stay and await death below; and at the same time a tall gaunt man, with long streaming grey hair, and large, wild, melancholy eyes, pushed himself forward into the torchlight. "Why should we fly?" he cried, "and whither can we go to hide us from the wrath of God? Lo, I tell you, and it shall come to pass, that no sun shall ever rise again upon this earth except the Sun of righteousness. The last day, the last great day, is at hand, and in vain ye say to the mountains, 'Fall upon us, and to the hills, Cover us, in the great and terrible day of the Lord.' Make ready

your hearts, and prepare your souls, for verily ye are called to judgment, and the Son of Man is coming, in clouds and glory, to separate the sheep from the goats."

His words, his solemn gestures, his wild and enthusiastic look, supported by his reputed sanctity of life, plunged the people in deeper despair; but Flavia again interposed, and with sweet and gentle, yet dignified and commanding, eloquence, she won the people to hear, to yield, and to obey her. Lighted by a single torch, for those they had brought had burned so far that it became necessary to spare them, the melancholy procession wound up the road, which led over the mountains towards Titurum. After travelling for at least a mile, with a continual ascent, they again paused; and in order both to give new courage to the sinking hearts of those who accompanied her, and to prevent the enthusiast Mizetus from adding to their terrors, the lady besought the good priests of the palace church to guide them in praying to the Almighty in their hour of peril.

The old man had not spoken since they

left the city; but the mild words of the Roman lady seemed to wake him from the stupor of anguish and terror into which he had fallen. Called upon to find words of consolation for the flock committed to his charge, he applied them first to his own heart, and instantly remembering the hopes and promises of a pure and exalted faith, he broke forth in a strain of powerful eloquence, now directing the people to put their trust in that Almighty arm which can save in the time of the most awful danger; now raising his voice in prayer to God, mingling adoration with petition, and offering at once the sacrifice of faith and supplication.

The people gathered round, slaves and free-men together, lifting their pale faces and anxious eyes by the dull torchlight to the countenance of the priest. They gained confidence and courage, however, at his words; and when he began his prayer, they knelt around upon the still shaking earth, and rose again with hearts full of trust, calmed and strengthened by devotion. None had stood aloof, not even those who had hitherto remained firm to their ancient

idolatry. In that hour of horror, they felt the need of some higher hope and more abiding trust, and they kneeled with the rest to that more mighty God whom hitherto they had not known.

Ere they rose, a light and grateful wind sprang up from the mountains; and, with hope once more awakened, in a still dark and superstitious age, even so slight a change as that was received as a favourable presage. Many there were who regarded it as a sign that their prayers were heard; and when at length the calm grey dawn began to look from the eastern hills upon the wearied and anxious groups below, though the earth still shook, from time to time with a convulsive shudder, the sight of the blessed light of returning day seemed to take the worst apprehension from their overloaded hearts, and many an eye shed tears of joy, to see again those rays which they had feared were obscured for ever.

Rashness generally follows terror allayed; and scarcely had the sun fully risen, when numbers, anxious for friends whom they saw not,—or, perhaps, with more sordid motives,—began to

hasten away towards the village and the palace. But the earth still shook, and Flavia, with her family and servants, still remained upon the hill, after striving anxiously to persuade the rest to wait till all was again completely still. Her reasoning was in vain, however, and troop after troop went off; but scarcely was the day an hour old, when another severe shock was felt, and many who had escaped the dangers of that fearful night were crushed or maimed in the ruins of the dwellings to which they had returned. That shock was the last, as it was the longest, which was felt, and when it subsided, all remained quiet; and though the ground was seen yawning in various places, though parts even of the mountains had slipped from their places, and rocks lay overthrown in the valleys; though the courses of the streams had been altered, and the whole face of the land was changed; yet it soon became evident that the earthquake was over, and mourning was all that remained, — mourning unmingled with fear.

There was mourning in the hearts of all; and yet how many a glad embrace, how many

a tender and affectionate caress, how many a prayer and thanksgiving, expressed the gratitude, the joy, the love, which filled the bosoms of Flavia and her family! How many an earnest and a wistful glance at the faces of each other told that, in the anguish of that long horrible night, selfish fear had been superseded by apprehensions of a nobler kind!

Bright and beautiful, calm and serene, the day rose up over that scene of desolation and ruin, smiling as if to give comfort and consolation to the smitten earth; but still Flavia lingered on the hills, unwilling to trust her children or her domestics amidst the ruins of the palace, till she should be well assured that safety might be found within its walls. As the sun grew hot, however, she removed to the edge of a small wood of tall ilexes which hung upon the edge of the mountain road, though many of the finest trees had been uprooted and thrown down either by the wind or the earthquake; and having placed herself beneath the shade, with her children round her, several of the slaves ran hither and thither,

to seek some food whereof to offer their well loved mistress the morning's meal. Each returned with something ; but each had some sad tale to tell of the ravages that were to be traced in the direction in which he had gone. Milk and wine and early fruits had been found in abundance amongst the various cottages in the neighbourhood, and a meal, plentiful, but simple as that of the night before, was spread upon the grass beneath the trees.

The earth was still, the air was fresh and sweet, and the birds had begun again their melody, forgetting in song, like the happy heart of youth, the blow of calamity as soon as it had passed away. All tended to soothe and to re-assure ; and the heart of Ammian, which, even during the terrible scenes of the past night, had not lost its bold and fearless daring, now broke out in light and wild fancies. He would know the causes of the earthquake ; and when he found that neither his mother nor Theodore could give a satisfactory reply to all his many questions — as who in that age could have furnished any on such a theme — he let

his imagination run wild in conjectures; and many a bright poetical theory he formed, and many a wild and baseless hypothesis he raised, sporting with all the dread images of the past like a child playing with the weapons of deadly strife gathered from a field of battle.

Then he urged his mother to return quickly to the palace, in order, as he said, to see what old Ocean had been doing there during their absence. With Theodore, Flavia held more rational intercourse, taking counsel with him as to what course she had to pursue, and expressing an apprehension lest the palace, left totally unguarded, might be plundered during her absence and that of the old imperial conservator, who remained with them, his senses still bewildered with all the terrors he had gone through. Theodore, however, showed her that the faithful slaves who had followed him through the building had brought away all the valuable jewels, caskets, and gold which they had found, and for the rest, he offered to return himself with the conservator and some of the slaves, and provide for the preservation of the palace and all that it contained.

“Go you with the rest to Salona, dearest mother,” he said: “some dwellings must there have been preserved; and amongst the merchants and traders which it contains you will always find shelter and assistance for gold. Shaken as the palace has been, many parts may yet be standing which will soon fall, and your presence would only be dangerous, and embarrass us in ascertaining the state of the building. I will accompany you part of the way to Salona, and then turn round by the heathen cemetery towards Aspalathus and the palace.”

Ildica listened, and her look seemed to say that she would fain accompany him; for hers was one of those hearts which would rather, far rather, take part in the danger and the grief of those they love than share even their happiest hours. But she said nothing; for she knew that her wishes ought not to be granted, and she would neither put her mother nor her lover to the pain of opposing her even by a word.

Eudochia, however, in the inconsiderate apprehensiveness of girlhood, clung to her bro-

ther, and besought him not to go ; but Theodore soon pacified her, assuring her that he would not venture rashly where danger was apparent; and, after a few more words, orders were given to the domestics, and Flavia rose to proceed towards Salona. Weariness, indeed, was in all limbs; and with slow and heavy steps, those who had remained with Flavia on the uplands, took their way along a road, which wound for some distance over the ridge of hills nearest to the sea, and then descended, separating into two branches, the one leading to the town of Salona, the other to Aspalathus and the neighbouring palace. The latter branch, with a steep declivity, wound down the hill, bordered on either hand by a long row of tall dark cypresses which reached from the northern gate of the palace to a cemetery on the side of the hill. In that burial ground, surrounded by a low wall not two feet high — thus built that all who passed might gaze upon the records of mortality within — lay crowded a multitude of tombs, checkered with groups of dull funereal trees. There reposed the remains of all who had died

in the vicinity, since Dalmatia had become a Roman province, and the frequent *Siste, viator!* called the eye, and recorded the vain attempt to teach mankind wisdom and moderation from the common lot of all.

It was near this burial-place, just where the roads parted, that Theodore paused, and, after a few minutes' conference with the old officer of the palace, selected several of the slaves to accompany him on his way. But just as he was about to depart, the eye of Ildica rested upon a cloud of dust that rose from the point where the road towards Salona became first visible, emerging from a thick grove at the distance of perhaps half a mile from the spot where they then stood.

"Look! look!" she said; "here are people coming up from the city — perhaps to give us assistance; and I trust they may bring a chariot or a litter, for my mother is pale and weary, and Eudochia is faint also."

"And you are weary, too, my Ildica!" said her mother. "But look! Theodore, look! Do you not see armour and helmets glittering

through the dust in the sun? It seems a turma of cavalry or more, for the line is long. Stay with us, my dear son, till we see what we have here : let us turn into this field opposite the cemetery while they pass by."

Her words were instantly obeyed as commands ; and, winding on with a slow equal march, a small body of horse, followed by a number of stragglers on foot, ascended the hill, and then without pause or question, took the way on towards Aspalathus. In a moment after, however, at a quicker pace, as if to overtake them, and followed by a number of soldiers and attendants, came a superior person, who paused on seeing the group seated in the neighbouring meadow, and sent a messenger to ask if much mischief had occurred at the palace in consequence of the earthquake, and whether the Lady Flavia were safe.

" She is well, and present," replied Flavia to the messenger : " who is it that sends ?"

" The military tribune, Marcian," replied the attendant, and Theodore instantly sprang up, exclaiming, " My father's dear and noble

friend!" and without other comment he ran down the field. As soon as the tribune beheld him he leapt from his horse and pressed him in his arms, and after a few brief words gave some orders to his attendants, and advanced with Theodore to the spot where Flavia sat.

He was a man already in the middle stage of life, tall and powerful in frame, and of mild, but firm and serious, countenance. He was not, perhaps, what would generally be reputed handsome, but his features were good; and there was the fire of genius in his large dark eye, the consciousness of energy on his broad square brow. Dignity was in his aspect and his whole demeanour; and, as he saluted the Lady Flavia, lamented with her the events of the preceding night, and inquired in tones of deep interest into all the perils through which she and her family had passed, there was that calm and graceful suavity in his deportment which inexpressibly won and struck every one who listened. Nevertheless there was a cloud, as if of some deep melancholy, hung upon his brow; and when Flavia informed him of her

purpose of proceeding to Salona, he shook his head mournfully, saying, "You had better not, lady! I think you had better not! It is a melancholy place," he added a moment after; "much shaken and ruined, and a great number of people have lost their lives there. I fear that accounts from other parts of the empire will be sad indeed."

There was something gloomy and thoughtful in the manner of the tribune that surprised and somewhat alarmed the Roman lady; for so much habitual self-command had the soldiers of the empire, that it was rare to see any one, especially of such rank and renown as Marcian, display upon the occasion of any misfortune like the earthquake, the natural feelings which were not the less busy at their hearts. The marble exterior of the old republicans was much affected by all who sought to distinguish themselves in the Roman armies; and Marcian was famed for a temperate but unyielding firmness, which admitted not the semblance of grief or apprehension.

"Think you, then," she asked, "that we had

better return to the palace? A report reached us in the night that the sea had nearly covered it."

Marcian paused for several minutes, as if meditating what were best to do, and then replied, "Lady, I will send to see the condition of the palace, and in the mean time bid them pitch me a tent here to give you shelter from the sun. We have provisions with us, too, and can offer you a meal, such as, perhaps, this great disaster may not have left at Aspalathus."

"I thank you," replied Flavia: "we have already eaten. We found no want of food amongst the cottages upon the hills."

But Marcian pressed upon them his hospitality so earnestly, that Flavia yielded, feeling that there was something more beneath his grave and thoughtful air than he suffered at first to appear; and while the tent was being raised by his attendants, he sent a messenger to the palace, with orders for such minute examination as showed that the day would be high ere he could return. Food already dressed was soon spread out under the tent; and one or two vessels of wine were produced, with several

rich cups and vases, carved with the exquisite workmanship of an earlier age, and shining with many a precious stone. With grave suavity the tribune did the honours of the meal, and spoke much, and of many things, but with a wandering and discursive spirit, as if his mind was forcing itself to the task, and seeking more largely the aid of imagination than might have been the case had the heart been itself at ease.

“ How magnificent are those cypresses ! ” he said, looking towards the long avenue which led down the hill, “ I never beheld finer, except, perhaps, some that grow on the hill above Byzantium. But those stand solitary, as if to mark the tomb of some warrior who has died afar from his own land ; these sweep down in a long row, like a line of departed monarchs seen in the shady grandeur of tradition. There they stood, centuries before Diocletian laid the first stone of his palace ; there they stand now, when his history is almost forgotten ; there they will stand, when we are as he is. Well are they placed between the palace and the sepulchre—those witnesses of the mortality of ages. The

common lot of man ! why should any one shrink from the common lot of man ? Why should we look with hope to this world's future, or turn back our eyes with lingering grief to the past, or nurse bright hopes of such young beings as these," and he laid his hand upon the head of Ammian, "or mourn with bitter regret for those who have changed the thorny couch of mortal life for the calm bed of the tomb ? Give me a cup of wine !"

"A prodigy ! a prodigy !" cried one of the slaves, running into the tent ; "an omen ! an omen ! Tribune, the eagle, which has hovered over us all the way from Salona, has settled on the pole of the tent !"

"Get ye gone !" replied Marcian ; "what have I to do with omens ? I may have the heart, without the wings of the eagle. Out upon ambition ! and yet this very Diocletian, who founded the palace hard by, was a slave before he was an emperor. But he loathed, resigned, and refused to resume the power which he had acquired and proved. That eagle haunts me : twice has it hovered for hours over me

while sleeping in the open field, and now it settles on my tent. These are strange accidents, and yet nothing more than accidents. Who should dream of ambition with those tombs before his eyes?— Give me some wine!”

The attendant who stood near handed the goblet, which he had held ready filled for some minutes, to his master; and Marcian*, yet but half a Christian, turned and poured some of the wine upon the ground. “ To the dead!” he said, looking mournfully round him, “ to the dead!” and his eyes fixed full and sadly upon Theodore.

The youth started suddenly on his feet, and grasped the tribune’s hand, exclaiming, “ My father! I adjure thee tell me! What of my father!”

Marcian threw his arms round the slighter form of his young friend, speaking some words in a low tone. Flavia rose and gazed eagerly

* He was at this time, probably, an Arian; but there is reason to believe that his family had long held their ancient religion, against all the decrees of the Christian emperors.

in the face of the tribune, who shook his head mournfully as his reply; and Theodore hid his face in his mantle, while Eudochia burst into wild and weeping lamentations. Ildica's dark eyes overflowed in silence; and though Flavia let not one drop roll over the jetty fringes of her eyelids, her pale cheek grew paler, and her lip quivered with intense emotion. Marcian said no more, but gazed down sternly upon the hilt of his sword; and the only words that were uttered for some time were, "Alas, Paulinus!" which broke from the lip of Ammian.

CHAP. VII.

THE DEPARTURE.

It was a long and dreary pause ; but at length the stern and virtuous soldier, who, ere many more years had passed, seated himself without crime or bloodshed in the chair of the Cæsars, laid his hand upon the arm of Theodore, with a firm but kindly pressure which spoke at once to a heart full of high feelings and of noble energies, and roused it from the dull stupor of sudden grief.

“ Oh, Marcian,” exclaimed the youth, “ this is an unexpected stroke ! So short a while since I saw him depart full of vigour, and life, and happiness. So short, so common a journey — so easy — so safe ! How, tell me how this has befallen ? Was it by sickness, or accident, or war with some rebel, or in the chase of some wild beast ? ”

“ Alas, no ! ” replied Marcian ; “ it was by

none of these, my son. Nor would I wound your young heart afresh, by telling how it did take place, were it not absolutely necessary for you to know your father's fate, in order that you may gain an augury or a warning of your own, and timely prevent it."

"The Emperor," cried Flavia, "the Emperor has destroyed his faithful friend: Paulinus saw it before he went. Every line of his last letter breathes the anticipation of his coming fate. He saw it in the gloomy brow of Theodosius; he saw it in the smile of Chrysapheus; he felt that he was going, never to return. Say, tribune, say! was it not the Emperor's deed?"

"Even so!" replied Marcian. "By the order of him whom he had served with unequalled fidelity and truth — the friend of his schoolboy hours, the companion of his high and noble studies — by the hands of those he thought his friends — hands that had been plighted to him in affection, and raised with his in battle — at his own social board, and in the hour of confiding tranquillity — was slain

Paulinus, leaving not a nobler nor a better behind."

Theodore again shed tears, but Flavia asked eagerly, "The cause, tribune! What was the cause — or, rather, what the pretext for cause — reasonable cause there could be none for dooming to death one of the purest, noblest, least ambitious men that the world has ever yet seen."

"The cause was jealousy, lady," replied Marcian; "a cause that leads men ever to wild and madlike actions. In the gardens of the Cæsars, near their eastern capital, is a solitary tree which bears fruit rarely, but when it does, produces an apple like that which hung in the garden of the children of Hesperus — small in size, golden in colour, and ambrosial to the taste. Paulinus had bestowed on Eudoxia a book, containing poems of Sappho, which no other manuscript can produce; and the Empress, in return, had sportively promised her husband's friend the rarest thing that she could find to bestow. The tree of which I spoke had in the past autumn produced but one apple, and that was sent, on the entrance of the new

year, by Theodosius to Eudoxia. She, in thoughtless innocence, sent it as the rarest of all things to Paulinus, and Chrysapheus took good heed that the fact should reach the Emperor's ears, distorted to his purpose. Fury seized upon the heart of Theodosius; but the base eunuch had sufficient skill and power to make him conceal his suspicions and his hatred, for Chrysapheus well knew that an open accusation might produce a bold and successful defence. Paulinus was sent to Cæsarea; and there, unheard, without trial, and without justice, was put to death!"

"Tyrant!" muttered Theodore. "Base, ungrateful tyrant!"

"Let your indignation swallow up your grief, my Theodore!" replied Marcian; "but let it not injure your country. Great as it is, great as it well may be, still greater will it become when you hear that Valens, your father's bosom friend, has been since sacrificed for no other crime than his love for Paulinus; that several of your household slaves have been slain by the Emperor's orders; and that all the wealth of

Paulinus has been bestowed upon Chrysapheus!"

Theodore again started up, exclaiming — I swear by all my hopes, and by my father's spirit ——"

But Marcian caught his arm. "Swear nothing against your country, my son," he cried: "Theodore, we have need of every Roman!"

"Hear me! hear me!" cried Theodore. "Naught against my country. No, never, let the temptation be what it may, will I draw the sword against Rome. So help me the God in whom I trust! But should ever the time come when this hand can reach a tyrant, or a tyrant's minister, it shall doom him to death as remorselessly as he has doomed my noble father;" and having spoken, he cast himself down, and again covered his face in his mantle.

Never, perhaps, through all the long tragic record of human woes and sufferings which the past, the sad and solemn past, holds in its melancholy treasury — never was there yet a scene in which the dark feeling of desolation penetrated more deeply into every

bosom, than in the one which surrounded the tribune Marcian. The horrors, the fatigues, the destruction of the preceding night, had laid every heart prostrate in the general calamity; and when the blow of individual grief fell heavy upon all alike, it seemed to crush and trample out in every breast the last warm kindly hopes — the last bright delusions of our phantasm-like existence.

Flavia gazed on her children, and on the orphans, in deep melancholy; while Theodore, with his face buried in his robe, sat apart, and Eudochia hid her streaming eyes upon her adoptive mother's lap. Ildica, with clasped hands, and cheeks down which the large bright tears rolled slow, now gazed upon her young and mourning lover; now turned an inquiring, anxious, longing glance towards Marcian; who, on his part, again, with knitted brow and downcast eyes, sat in the midst, stifling emotions which struggled hard against control. Even the slaves of Flavia and Paulinus, amongst whom the news had spread, gathered round the open tent, and, standing wrapped up in their dark penulæ, gazed with mournful and sympathising looks

upon the sad group beneath its shade ; while mingled amongst them, here and there, were seen some of the stout soldiers who had accompanied the tribune, evidently sharing, notwithstanding all their own habits of danger and suffering, and their frequent familiarity with death itself, in the grief of the young and hapless beings before them.

One only of the party seemed occupied with other thoughts, and yet the seeming belied him. Ammian, reclining by the side of the little sandy path which crossed the meadow where they sat, seemed busy, in his usual abstracted manner, in tracing figures on the dust. One of the soldiers moved across to see what he was employed in, and by that action drew the attention of Marcian, whose eyes turned thither too ; when, to his surprise, he beheld, written in the Greek character, upon the sand.

“ Death to all tyrants ! The blood of the guilty for the blood of the innocent ! Vengeance for Paulinus ! ”

Rising at once, he set his foot upon the writing ere the slower soldier could decipher

what it meant; and then, raising his finger to Ammian, he said with emphasis, "Beware!"

The boy looked up in his face, and answered calmly, "I will beware, most noble Marcian!" But there was meaning in his eyes, and Marcian chose not to urge his wild and daring spirit farther.

Seating himself again by Flavia's side, the tribune, with the calm gentleness of a compassionate heart, endeavoured to soothe the pain which it had been his bitter task to inflict; and when he had, in a degree, succeeded in gaining attention, he gave some orders to the soldiers, and spoke some words to the slaves, which caused them to retire from the vicinity of the tent.

"Listen to me, Theodore," he said; "listen to me, noble lady! Grief has had its part; other duties call for your consideration. I would fain ask you, sweet Flavia, whither you now propose to turn your steps; what plan you now propose to follow?"

"We proposed," replied Flavia, after a moment's hesitation, "to go forward to Salona; there to wait, if we could find a refuge, till the

palace was again rendered habitable, or till we could send those things which may be necessary to our own villa upon the mountains. I have not dwelt in it since my husband's death, but if it be necessary I can conquer memory."

"To Salona!" replied Marcian, musing; "to Salona! It is true, you could easily fly thence in case of necessity to Ravenna; but Valentinian, if report has informed me rightly, loves you not, and might avenge himself by giving you up to Theodosius!"

Flavia gazed earnestly in the tribune's countenance, as the new and painful conviction of fresh dangers broke upon her. "More sorrows!" she said, "more, more, to be endured! Think you, then, noble Marcian, that we are in danger at Salona? Think you, then, that Theodosius will extend his persecution even to us, innocent as we are?"

"He has already slain one as innocent as any of us, lady," replied the tribune, "and he has given up to the sword one friend and many of the slaves of him who is gone. Do you believe, then, that he will spare the

cousin of one whom he hated—a cousin who was loved as a sister? Can you trust to his stopping short with the father, and not carrying on his vengeance to the son?"

"Oh that I were in his palace!" cried Theodore: "oh that I were in his hall, and before his throne!"

But Flavia answered more calmly, "Tell us all our danger, tribune. Give your kind and generous advice. You are known as wise and good, as well as brave and skilful. We will give our actions into your hands for guidance. You shall shape our course as you think fit."

"Lady," replied Marcian in a tone which, notwithstanding all his command over himself, showed how much his heart was moved,—
"lady, I loved Paulinus as a brother. He was wise and eloquent, learned and brave, and I am but the son of a common soldier, nurtured in camps, and educated in the rude field. Yet between my heart and his there were common feelings; and in the course of our various lives we chained our souls together by mutual benefits: may his shade find Elysium! When I

heard of what had befallen, my first thought was of my friend's children. My cohort was in Dalmatia, my time of command approaching; and though I had been called to the capital by the Imperial mandate, I prepared to come hither with all speed. While I so prepared, I heard of the death of Valens and the slaves, and doubted not that the cup might next pass to me. I presented myself before the Emperor to know at once my doom; but he contented himself with commanding me to come hither, and lead the troops instantly into Thrace. Another cohort under the command of Strator, the bitter enemy of Paulinus, is ordered hither instantly to regulate—such is the pretext—the line of frontier with the messengers of Valentinian. Lady, I fear me there may be other purposes to execute; and I have hastened, without pause or rest, to bring you tidings, which, sad as they are, might have been crowned with bitterer still, if I had not been the messenger,—to bring you such tidings, and to take counsel with you for your safety. My opinion, indeed, my advice, is little worthy of your having; but

still, let us consult together, and — as far as my duty as a soldier and a Roman will permit—let me be a brother to the Lady Flavia, a father to my dead friend's orphans."

"Your advice will be as wise as your heart is kind," replied Flavia. "Oh give it us, my friend! give it to us fully and openly. We will be guided by it, unless there be reasons against it, which even you yourself shall approve. If safety be not to be found in Illyricum, whither would you have us go?"

"To the extreme limits of the empire!" replied Marcian. "What matters it to you what the land be called which you inhabit for a few short years? what matters it if the north wind blow somewhat more coldly than in this golden land? if winter wear a ruder aspect, and the flowers and fruits linger for the summer sun, ere they bloom and ripen?"

"What matters it, indeed!" said Flavia. "We love this scene, tribune,—well and dearly do we love this glorious scene—but we love it more from the tender memories that have been attached to it, than even for its sunny splen-

dour and its face of beauty. But now the thunder which has stricken us has turned the sweet and fruity wine which filled our cup to sour and hateful dregs. Another land will be brighter in our sight. Freedom from a tyrant's neighbourhood shall supply the place of beauties that we leave behind; the absence of objects that recall our griefs shall compensate for those that once awoke our joys; peace shall be our atmosphere of balm, security our sunshine. What say you, Theodore?"

"Let us go, my mother," replied the youth: "where you and Ildica, Ammian and Eudochia, are with me, shall be my country. The tyrant has smitten down one object of my love, but he is powerless over my capability of loving: that which was parted is now all concentrated. You will go with me, my Ildica, is it not so? and my father's blessing—the blessing of the dead—shall follow, and comfort us in exile. But whither would you direct our course, noble Marcian?"

"Towards the banks of the Danube," he replied. "There, at the extreme verge of the

Imperial territory, the power of Theodosius waxes weak, and is exercised with difficulty. There, too, if mad and persevering jealousy drive him still to seek your hurt, ten steps place you beyond his reach, where the feeble and degenerate Cæsar dare not stretch a hand to grasp you : your father's brother dwells at Margus, bishop of the place."

Theodore's countenance fell. " He was indeed the brother of my father's blood," he answered, " but was never the brother of his love. Grasping, avaricious, crafty, I have heard my father say, that Eugenius has the talents, but not the virtues, of a Roman."

" Yet with him," replied Marcian, " are you sure of a safer asylum than with any one else. Even at this moment he is at enmity with the court of Theodosius, and bears a mortal hatred to Chrysapheus, who had wronged him, abandoned him, and, notwithstanding the pleading of your father in his behalf, would have willingly given him up to the barbarians. With him you will find safety, I must not say you will find vengeance—but it may be so."

“ Let us go !” cried Theodore ; “ let us go, my mother ! The gold and jewels which, unwitting of all this, I made the Numidians carry forth last night, will render the journey lighter to you, dear mother ; and if my uncle, careful of his wealth, refuse to give me support, I will find means to win it for myself.”

“ Fear not for that,” replied Marcian ; “ your father’s wealth, Theodore, is gone, but his estates are yours ; and even Theodosius dares not openly take from you that which no law has sentenced you to lose. Strange that he who unquestioned takes a life unjustly should not have power to seize your land, and yet it is so. Now, lady, let me send once more to the palace, and bid them bring forth all that your treasury contains. Take with you all your moveable wealth ; for if you do not so guard yourself, it will fall into hands which render no account. I will bid them, too, bring forth whatever litters and carriages they find, to bear you less weary on the way ; and ere two days be over, I will follow, and rejoining you, protect you from harm, till, on the frontiers of Moesia, I must

leave you and march on. At all events, my presence and my troops will insure your safety so far; and even after that, I shall be interposed between you and your enemies, so that no messenger of evil can pass without my learning his purpose, delaying his journey, and giving you timely tidings. Speed however matters much, and now I would have you set forth without a day's delay."

Flavia sought not to procrastinate; for though many a clinging memory attached her to those scenes by the fine filmy ties of associations, which even the sharp edge of grief could not cut, yet the safety of Theodore, the happiness of her own child, the enfranchisement from a state of society, where virtue was no safeguard, and justice afforded no shield, were objects too dear and high to be risked by delay. Few and melancholy were the words that now passed, but the orders of Marcian were promptly obeyed; and though he would suffer neither Flavia nor Theodore to return, even for an hour, to the palace, knowing far more of the cruel orders which Theodosius had already

given against them than he chose to communicate, yet a number of their domestics were sent thither with his soldiers to remove all that belonged to either family in the building.

Ere the sun had passed the meridian more than an hour, all who had been sent had returned, and many and curious were the objects which now surrounded that sad group by the side of the cemetery. A number of mules and horses were there ; the black charger, which had carried Paulinus in his last victory over the Alani, and which had never been ridden since by any one but himself ; the white horses which drew the low carriage called *pilentum*, wherein Flavia was accustomed to drive along the margin of the sea ; litters with their silver feet, and covered chairs of gold and ivory ; rich caskets ; leathern bags of gold and silver coin ; and large quantities of silks and fine linens, (then become general, but still considered costly,) made up into packages of convenient sizes for carrying on the shoulders of the slaves, or placing on the beasts of burden, together with cups and vases of gold, silver, and precious stones ; and slaves of all complexions and of every different feature.

Every thing, in short, which was usually collected in a wealthy and powerful Roman house, at that luxurious and extravagant period, was there scattered round in glittering profusion, giving that group the appearance of some caravan from Ophir or from Tyre reposing on its journey. Some confusion and some delay took place, though every thing was arranged as quickly as possible, while Flavia looked on in calm sadness, and Theodore gazed upon the scene with burning indignation unquenched by grief, making his lip still quiver, and his bright eye flash.

At length all was prepared, and with a few words of heartfelt thanks to Marcian, the lady placed herself with Ildica in one of the *lectulæ* or litters, Eudochia and her chief attendant reclined in another. Ammian sprang upon a small Thracian horse, and Theodore mounted his father's charger. The noble beast, wild with unwearied strength, reared high and snorted fiercely, as he felt the light weight of the young Roman; but Theodore with skill and power soon curbed him to his will, and patted his proud neck, while a tear, given to the me-

mory of him who was gone, wetted his eyelids. The whole party then moved on, winding back again along the path which they had trodden that very morning.

Their way lay over the hills, and for an hour they moved on, ascending gently, but without stopping, till at length, on the highest spot of the inferior acclivity, which lies at the foot of the higher mountains, Flavia bade the bearers stop, and gazed out of the litter upon the scene which she was quitting perhaps for ever. There it lay, robed in the same splendid sunshine which had adorned it on the preceding day. To the eyes which looked upon it not a change was to be seen. The palace, the village, the distant town of Salona, the beautiful bay, the golden islands which are scattered along the coast, the liquid sapphire in which they seemed to float, were all sleeping beneath the wanderers' glance in the drowsy heat of mid-day, looking calm and tranquil, as if nature herself imitated the hypocrisy of man, and covered with deceitful smiles the desolation which reigned within her bosom. The measured round of the sun had scarcely been accomplished, since those

who now stood upon the hill-top, fugitives from their dear domestic hearths, had met together after separation, and had gazed over that same lovely prospect from the clump of cypresses which now lay beneath their eyes. Scarcely had one round of the sun been accomplished since standing there they had gazed upon that pageant-like scene of beauty, and had felt all its fair features reflected from the clear bright mirror of the happy heart. Scarcely had one round been accomplished since every splendid object that the eye could find, and every sweet sound that the ear could catch, in a spot and a moment when all was music and brightness, had seemed but an image, a type, a prophecy of joys and happiness and successes yet to come; and yet in that brief space, an earthquake had rent and torn that enchanted land, and had scattered ruin, desolation, and death, over its fair calm face:—in that brief space, from the bosoms of those who gazed upon it had been torn the bright joys of youth and inexperience; had been scattered the dear hopes and warm imaginings of innocent expectation; had been riven one of the dearest ties of human ex-

istence, the great band of the loving and the loved: for not one in that sad family but felt that the unjust fate of Paulinus had given a chilly coldness to their hearts, — no, not one from the youngest to the oldest. The young felt that the fresh bloom was gone for ever from the Hesperian fruit; the elder that the cropped flower of hope, which had again been beginning to blossom, had been once more crushed down, and never could bloom again.

Between their fate and the scene they gazed upon there seemed some fanciful affinity; each felt it, each lingered with fond regret to gather into one glance all the thousand lovely and beloved sights; each sighed as they gazed and thought of the “*For ever!*” and at length even from Flavia’s eyes broke forth the long repressed tears.

The slaves stood round, and sympathised with those who mourned. Many a dark eye, and many a rough cheek, was moistened with the drops of kindly feeling, till at length the lady wiped her tears away, and waving her hand towards the valleys on the other side, said, “Let us go on!”

Again they began to move, when the voices of two slaves broke forth in a mournful song, which they had probably often sung in their own remote land.

SLAVE'S SONG.

1.

“ We leave ye behind us, sweet things of the earth ;
 Our life's but a race to the death from the birth ;
 We pause not to gather the flowers as they grow,
 The goal is before us, and on we must go !
 We leave ye behind us, sweet things of the earth.

2.

“ Fair scenes of our childhood, dear homes of our youth,
 Memorials of innocence, virtue, and truth,
 The land of our birth, the dear mother that bore, —
 We leave ye behind us, we see you no more !
 We leave ye behind us, sweet things of the earth.

3.

“ The joys that we tasted we taste not again ;
 Each hour has its burden, each day has its pain ;
 No moment in flying, but hurries us past
 Some sight, sound, or feeling more dear than the last !
 We leave ye behind us, sweet things of the earth.

4.

“ We leave ye behind us, and others shall come
 To tread in our footsteps, from cradle to tomb ;

Still gazing back fondly, with lingering eyes,
 Where behind them the bright land of memory lies !
 We leave ye behind us, sweet things of the earth.

5.

“ The sound of Time’s pinion, as fast he doth fly,
 Is echoed from each mortal breast by a sigh ;
 What if there be fruits ? — they ungather’d must grow,
 For fate is behind us, and on we must go !
 We leave ye behind us, sweet things of the earth.

6.

“ We leave ye behind us, sweet things of the earth,
 Hopes, joys, and endearments, sport, pleasure, and mirth,
 Like a tempest-driven ship, sailing by some bright shore,
 Time hurries us onward — we see you no more !
 We leave ye behind us, sweet things of the earth.”

CHAP. VIII.

THE STRANGER.

IT was in the calends of June, and yet the day had very few of the attributes of summer. The grey rain came down heavily from the dull leaden sky, the wind rushed in fierce gusts from the north-east, the stream of the Danube rolled dark and rapidly, and a melancholy murmur rose up from its waters while they hurried on to the gloomy Euxine, as if in reply to the sad and wailing voice of the breeze. The only thing that spoke the season of the year was the vivid verdure of the wide green pastures, and the rich blossoms that hung upon the frequent trees. Along the banks of the dark river, accompanied only by two freedmen on horseback, rode Theodore, the son of Paulinus, dressed in the deep mourning tunic and mantle of dark grey, with no ornament of any kind upon his person except at the hilt of his

sword. The same black charger bore him with which he had departed from Dalmatia; and pressing the noble beast onward, he cast his eyes frequently to the opposite bank of the river.

At length he suddenly drew in his bridle, exclaiming, "There is a raft, and if we can but make them hear we shall be secure. Dismount, Cremera; run to the margin, and shout loudly for the boatmen."

The dark Arab, who, though rendered free by Flavia after the earthquake, at Theodore's request, still followed the fortunes of the young Roman with love elevated by liberty, sprang eagerly to the ground to obey; but, to the surprise of all, ere he had led down his horse to the shore, the raft, which they had seen moored to the opposite bank, was put in motion by two men who had been sitting near, under the shelter of the wood, that was there thick and tall. Onward it came, skilfully piloted across the stream, till it approached the shore, on which Theodore and his two followers now stood ready to embark.

At the distance of twenty or thirty cubits, however, the raft paused, and those who steered it gazed upon the young Roman and his attendants with apparent doubt and surprise. Theodore pressed them to come on; and then, perceiving that they were barbarians from the north, he spoke to them in one of those dialects which feelings connected with his mother's memory had made him learn and preserve, even amidst the gay amusements and deeper studies which had since had their share of his time. She it was who had first taught his infant tongue to pronounce those sounds so difficult for a Roman to utter: she it was who had used those northern words towards her boy, in the early language of affection and tenderness; and though she had died at a period of his life when the wax on the tablets of memory is soft, and impressions are too easily effaced, he had never forgotten the accents that he had so dearly loved. But now, that knowledge proved not a little serviceable. The barbarians looked up in surprise; and when he told them, in a language they understood, to bring near their

raft with speed, as delay might be dangerous to him, they hastened to approach the shore, and suffered him to lead his unwilling horse upon the fluctuating and unsteady raft.

One of the attendants followed ; but the boatmen seemed to doubt whether their rude passage-boat would sustain the third man and horse ; though the large trunks of trees whereof it was composed were farther supported by skins blown out like bladders. Theodore, however, would not leave one behind ; and, though sinking deep in the water, the raft still bore them all up.

Floating heavily upon the rushing stream, it reached the other bank of the Danube, and a piece of gold repaid the service of the boatmen ; but though, when the foot of Theodore touched the barbaric land, he felt the thrill of security and freedom at his heart, yet, as he mounted his horse, and gazed upon the scene before him, he paused with a sensation of doubt and awe. The bank of the river, where he stood, was clothed with smooth green turf ; but both farther up and lower down the stream might be seen high rocks ; and at the distance of about

a hundred yards from the margin rose up dark, tall, and gloomy, the forest covering of primeval earth. The proximity of those mighty trees prevented the eye from discovering aught beyond them, except where the ground sloped down towards the west; but there, even, no promise of a more open country was given: for over the first forest line, at its lowest point, might be seen a wide extent of dark grey wood, rounded, and waving with an interminable ocean of leaves and branches.

The desolate aspect of the wilderness fell chill upon the heart of the young Roman; and though his resolution to pursue his way on that side of the river was not to be shaken, yet many a difficulty and a danger, he too well knew, lay before him. Through some part of that wood, he was aware, had been cut a military road, when the Romans had been indeed the sovereigns of the world; but since that time centuries had past, and the inhabitants of the country had changed: a thousand uncivilised tribes filled the land which the people of the Imperial city had once possessed; and all

her magnificent works had been destroyed, or neglected, beyond the mere frontier of the diminished empire. Theodore paused, and gazed upon that dark and gloomy wood, uncertain by what path he should direct his steps, and without remarking the keen and eager eyes with which the two barbarian ferry-men examined him from head to foot.

At length, as he still stood scanning the forest, one of them asked some question of the Arab Cremera; but it was couched in the language of the Alani, and Cremera could neither comprehend nor answer. The barbarian then advanced to the side of the young Roman's horse, and said, in a mild and sympathising voice, "Are you not he who was expected?"

"I am not," replied Theodore, in the same language. "I am a Roman; but I seek to go to Margus by the barbarian bank of the river."

"You will find it both difficult and dangerous," answered the other, "even if you already know this land; and if you do not

know it, the lizard which climbs the rocks and trees, and glides through the smallest space upon its onward way, might as well try to travel upon the water. Besides, you know not whether you are welcome in the land."

"My mother was daughter of Evaric, king of the Alani of Gaul," replied Theodore; "and wherever the land is tenanted by that nation I shall be welcome."

The man kissed the edge of his mantle, saying, "Be you welcome!" and Theodore continued: "Can you give me no one to guide me on my way?"

"I will see, I will see!" replied the other; and he ran swiftly up into the wood.

Ere he had been long absent he re-appeared, followed by a young man, clad in coarse clothing and common fur, who expressed himself willing, for a small reward, to undertake the task of guiding the stranger on his way; and though by his stature and complexion, very different from those of the tall and fair Alani, Theodore discovered at once that he was of some other tribe, and found, also, that

he could only speak a few brief sentences of their language, the young Roman was, nevertheless, glad to put himself under the guidance of any one who knew the country well. With the few words that he could command of the language which Theodore had been speaking, the guide told him that it would be a journey of two days from that spot to Margus, and that houses where they could find refreshment and repose would be few; but still Theodore determined to pursue his way, and the guide was at once promised the hire that he demanded.

He made the young Roman stay while he caught and mounted a small shaggy horse which had been straying in the wood, round a hut which was just to be distinguished upon the upland, through the bolls of the tall trees. No sooner had he sprung upon his beast, however, than the whole nature of the barbarian seemed changed. Where he had been slow and limping in his gait, he became quick and active; and setting off at full speed through the forest, he pursued paths along which it was scarcely possible for Theodore and his companions to follow

him ; so narrow were they, so tangled, so insecure for any horse unaccustomed to those intricate wilds.

Still poured down the rain ; and as they galloped on through those dim vistas and sudden breaks, the white mist rolled in volumes amongst the trees, and each footfall of the horses produced a cloud from the marshy grass. At length, towards the evening, the sun, some three hours past his meridian, began to break through the heavy clouds, and streamed down the glades of the forest, while the light vapours rolled away, and the birds sang sweetly from the woody coverts around. In another hour three small tents of skins were seen ; and pausing there for a short space, the guide procured some food for the horses and milk for the riders. The people of the tents looked wild and fierce, and spoke the dialect of the Huns, which was unintelligible to all ears but that of the guide. They showed no curiosity in regard to the stranger's appearance, but they evinced that avidity which is the peculiar vice of frontier tribes.

At the end of less than an hour the guide pointed to the sun and to the horses; and Theodore mounting, once more followed him on his way. Night fell ere they again saw a human abode; but at length they halted before a tall tower of hewn stone, which had in former years been a Roman fort, built as a defence against the very barbarians who now possessed the land. The guide tried the gateway; but finding it fast, shouted loudly for admission. He then paused to listen if any reply were made; and while he did so, Theodore heard afar the melancholy roaring of the Danube.

At length some grim faces and wild fur-clad forms presented themselves at the gate, and Theodore and his followers were led into what had been the chamber of the guard. There was no want of hospitality — nay, nor of courtesy of heart — shown by the rude tenants of that half ruined building, to the young stranger who sought the shelter of the roof that had become theirs. They lighted a fire in the midst of the hall to dry his still damp garments; they brought forth their stock of fruit and milk, and

even some of the delicacies obtained from the neighbouring country. Broiled fish was speedily added ; and while the men, by speaking gestures, pressed him to his food, the women touched his mantle, and seemed by their smiles to marvel at its fineness.

Though their appearance was rude, and no comeliness of form or feature won by external beauty that confidence which is so often refused to homely truth, yet Theodore read in their looks that he was secure, and lay himself down upon a bed of skins to seek that repose which he so much needed. The freed-men lay at his feet ; and all was soon silence within those crumbling walls : but sleep, the bosom friend of youth and happiness, grows timorous as a scared bird after the first fell grasp of grief. All that he had gone through within the last sad month, all that weighed upon his mind even then, came back in the visions of the night, and three times roused the young Roman from his light and troubled slumbers. The first time all was still, and the light of the blazing fire of pine flickered

over the dark forms that lay sleeping around. The next time when he woke two figures were standing between him and the light, but one soon turned away and left the chamber, while the other, who remained, cast some fagots on the embers, and again lay himself down to rest. The slumber that succeeded was deeper, heavier, more tranquil; and when he again awoke, daylight was streaming in from above. Almost all the Huns whom he had seen the night before had left the chamber, and one, whom he had not hitherto beheld, stood with his arms folded on his chest, gazing upon him as he lay stretched in the morning light.

Between Theodore and the barbarian, however, awakened, watchful, and prepared, with his spear grasped in his hand, sat the faithful Cremera, his giant limbs and swelling muscles all ready to start into defence of his master on the slightest appearance of danger; but the eyes of the Hun seemed not even to see the slave, so intently were those small but searching orbs turned upon the countenance of the young Roman. Even when he woke, and looked up, the Hun

withdrew not that steadfast gaze ; but seemed to contemplate, with eager curiosity, the same features, which he had beheld silent and cold in sleep, now wakening up into warm and speaking life.

Theodore returned the glance for a moment, without rising, and, as he lay, scanned the person of the Hun. He was shorter than the ordinary height of the Romans ; but his breadth across the shoulders was gigantic, with thin flanks and long muscular arms. His features were by no means handsome, and his complexion was a pale dark brown ; but yet there was something in that countenance remarkable, striking, not displeasing. The small black eyes had an inexpressible brilliancy ; the forehead, surmounted with thin grey hair, was broad, high, and majestic ; and the firm immovable bend of the almost beardless lips spoke that decision and strength of character which, when displayed either in good or evil, commands a separate portion of respect. His dress was nearly the same as that of the other barbarians whom Theodore had already encountered, con-

sisting of dark grey cloth and skins ; but the cloth was somewhat finer in texture, and the skins had a smooth and glossy softness, which showed the young Roman that the man who stood before him was superior to the rest of those by whom he was surrounded. Nor had it, indeed, required the slight superiority of his garb to teach Theodore that he beheld no ordinary man. It has been asserted, and it may be so, that from some hidden source of sympathy, some instinctive prescience, we always feel peculiar sensations on first meeting with one who is destined greatly to influence or control our fate through life ; and whether such be the case or not, certain it is that through the breast of Theodore, the moment his eyes rested on the Hun, passed a thrill not of fear nor of awe, nor even of surprise, but of strange and mingled emotions, such as he had never known before ; and, as I have said, he continued in the same recumbent attitude, gazing firmly in the face of one who gazed so steadfastly at him.

After a short pause, however, the Hun spoke, addressing him in the tongue of the Alani.

“ Though that bed,” he said, in a low, deep-toned voice, every word of which was as distinct and clear as if spoken by a Stentor, — “ though that bed must be but a hard one for the soft limbs of a Roman, thou seemest too fond of it for such a youth as thou art.”

“ Thou art mistaken, barbarian,” replied Theodore, springing on his feet; “ the Romans, who can lie on silken couches when they find them, do not think the ground either too cold or too hard when necessary to use it for their bed. I was weary with long journeying for many days; otherwise the crowing cock is my awakener.”

“ Thou speakest the Alan tongue well,” said the Hun, gazing at him from head to foot; “ and thou art in colour and in size like a north-man. Say, art thou really a Roman?”

“ I am,” replied Theodore; “ but my mother was the daughter of Evaric ——”

“ King of the Alani,” interrupted the Hun: “ then thy father was Paulinus, count of the offices. We have met,” he added, musing, “ we have met; he is a valiant man: where is he now?”

“ In the grave,” replied Theodore.

The Hun started ; and after a moment’s pause replied, “ I grieve for him ; he was a valiant man : how did he die ? ”

“ It matters not,” answered Theodore ; “ he is dead. And now, barbarian, I would fain speed on my way, for I would be at Margus as early as may be. Where is my guide ? ”

“ To Margus ! ” said the Hun : “ know you that the priest of that city — the bishop as they call him — has offended Attila the king ? know you that Attila has demanded him from Theodosius as a slave, to set his foot upon his neck, and trample on him ? ”

“ I have heard such rumours as I came hither,” replied Theodore ; “ but it matters not to me what quarrel there may be between my uncle and the barbarian chief. Attila will find it hard to trample on the brother of Paulinus.”

“ Ay ! So he is Paulinus’ brother ! ” cried the Hun ; “ I do remember now he *is* his brother : but if thou bearest tidings from Theodosius to thine uncle, tell him to put no faith in the arms

of men who know not how to use them; to trust not in those who daily break their promises. Tell him that he who bade you thus speak knows full well Attila the king; and that he will as soon abandon his prey as the hungry vulture. Your guide is gone; but follow me; I will show you the way to Margus."

A number of barbarians were collected in the lower part of the tower, and in the open space round it, but without a word they suffered Theodore and his freedmen, with their new guide, to proceed to a tree under which four horses stood prepared. All past in silence; no one stood forward to assist; no one advanced to require recompense from the young stranger. The Hun who accompanied him sprang on his own horse at one bound, and then sat as if of a piece with the animal; while Theodore drew forth a coin of gold, and beckoned forward the barbarian who had acted the foremost part, on the preceding night, in offering him the rites of hospitality. The man looked wistfully at the gold piece which Theodore held out towards him, and then at the

face of his superior, who sat beside the young Roman. The horseman, however, bowed his head, and the other instantly took the money, uttering a number of words which Theodore did not understand, but construed into thanks. Turning their bridles then towards the Danube, the journey towards Margus was recommenced, the Hun leading the way at a slow pace.

“ You ride not so swiftly as our guide of yesterday,” said Theodore, after proceeding for a few minutes with the impatience of youth and anxiety urging him on; “ remember, I would be at Margus ere nightfall.”

“ ’Tis a three hours’ journey,” said the other, calmly : “ you are impatient, youth. I would fain spare the beast thou ridest ; for, were it as the gods willed it to be, it would be a noble creature, and thou hast ridden it too long and too hard yesterday for a creature so sleek and pampered.”

“ Despise it not, Hun !” said Theodore, as he saw the keen bright eye of his companion running over the charger’s limbs ; “ despise it not. It has carried my father through a

bloody field of battle, and has borne me through a long and painful journey, after which it may well show some signs of weariness; therefore despise it not, though it be unlike the rugged brute which thou ridest thyself."

"I do not despise it," rejoined the Hun. "In former times its soft and silken coat, its delicate limbs, and weighty body, might have provoked my scorn; but I have learned to know that all things have their uses, and to despise nothing but vicious luxury, effeminacy, and cowardice. I see no reason why there should not be tribes who fight and tribes who cultivate the land: each may be useful; and so with your horse and mine. Mine will carry me with a swiftness, and to a distance, and for a length of time, impossible to yours; will bear weather, and food, and cold, under which yours would die; but very likely in the shock of battle yours would bear down mine — if I did not prevent it — and, perhaps, might perform feats that mine could never learn. It is only when I see man debase himself to carve images, and paint pictures, and work gold, and spend years

in making a dwelling to cover his miserable head, and lie upon the feathers of birds, and cover himself with the woven excrements of a worm, that I now feel disgust. Gems and jewels, and cups of gold and silver, may be wrought by other nations, and may be used by us; but it is the part of bold and brave men to take them from those who are weak and effeminate enough to make them."

"I cannot argue with you, barbarian," replied Theodore; "my mind wanders unto other things: but I have heard my father say that all the graces and elegances of social life are the true touchstone of the noble heart. Those who are inclined by nature to evil will become effeminate and corrupt under their influence; while those who are brave and virtuous only gain thence a higher point of virtue, and a nobler motive for daring. The diamond, when we throw it in the fire, loses nothing but the dirt and dust it may have gathered, and comes out clearer than before. A barbarian fights because he has nothing to lose but life, which has many miseries, and few enjoyments; a

Roman, because he has a duty to perform, although a thousand ties of refined pleasures and multiplied enjoyments bind him to the life he risks."

"Therefore is it that the Romans fight so feebly," replied the Hun; but as he saw the colour mounting in the cheek of Theodore, he added, "Be not angry, youth: my words shall not offend your ear in a land which thou hast sought, trusting to our hospitality. Thy father might well speak as thou sayest he did, for he was one of those that showed his own words true."

"Thou doest my father justice, my country wrong," replied Theodore; "but the day may come, Hun—the day may come, when Romans, rousing themselves from the sleep into which they have fallen, may teach those who now mistake idleness for cowardice, who take the love of repose and peace for timidity, that the lion yet lives, though his roar has not been heard for years."

A grim smile hung for a moment on the lip of the barbarian, and then passed away; but

he replied nothing directly to the tart answer of his young companion. At length, as they rode along by the rushing Danube, winding their way once more between the forests and the river, he pointed first to the one and then to the other bank, saying, “ Lo, Roman civilisation—Scythian rudeness! and yet, as thou sayest, the time may come—nay, it may be near, when the trial will take place, of which country produces, which habits nourish, the boldest hearts and strongest hands. But setting that apart, I say, give me the forest and the wild meadow, and the simple hut or tent of skins, truth, justice, freedom: for it is my belief that simplicity and honesty are one; luxury and falsehood are not to be divided. —Look at this forest,” he continued after a brief pause; “ it seems almost impervious, yet thou hast found a way through it; and at the foot of the hill which we are now mounting you will find a paved road, leading into the heart of the land. It was constructed by thy ancestors, nearly in a line with the famous vallum Romanum; and if at any time need or fancy should make thee wish to

see the nations which live beyond this woody barrier, follow that road, and ask for Onegisus, the friend of Attila the king. Thou shalt find safety, friends, and protection. But see ! we are at the top of the hill, and I must leave thee. Yonder, on the other side of the stream, where the blue mist is rolling up the mountain, lies Margus. Lo ! its many towers ! Thou canst not miss the way. Now Mars protect thee !”

CHAP. IX.

THE BISHOP OF MARGUS.

THE two sides of that mountain were like the prospect laid out beneath the eyes of man, when, in the midst of life, he pauses to survey the past, and scrutinise the future. Dark and gloomy, on the one hand, stretched masses impervious to the eye, wrapped in uncertain mists and vague undefined confusion, where nothing was known, nothing was sure, but that there lay ruin, chill neglect, and desolation, even unto those regions where the Cimmerian darkness of the grave covered and confounded all. On the other hand, stretching out like the sweet memories that lie along the path of youth, was seen a fair and beautiful land, with the Danube rushing on through the midst, towards Margus: valley and hill, fragments of the Dacian forests, but broken by broad cultivated plains, a watch-tower here and there; then, within their guardian line, a farm, a villa, gardens, and pas-

turages, with the towers and walls of Margus at about eight miles' distance ; and beyond, but to the right, the Mons Aureus rising like a pile of lapis lazuli, in blue majestic splendour to the sky.

Theodore paused to gaze ; and feelings mingled, intense, and even painful, woke in his bosom at the sight of those fair scenes from which he might so soon be driven, contrasted with that dark and gloomy land which might prove his only refuge.

He turned, however, after a moment's silence, to ask the Hun if he could, in truth, prefer the one to the other ; but the barbarian had left him without further leave-taking, and his dark form was seen riding rapidly towards the thickest part of the forest. Theodore still remained gazing over the prospect ; but, as he did so, he thought he heard a distant shout of many voices rising up from the woods behind him, and fearful of any interruption in his course, he hurried on upon the road which lay open before him.

Increasing tokens of civilisation now met his eye at every step as he proceeded ; and shortly before he reached the shore, at the nearest point

to the city, he beheld more than one ferry boat, no longer a mere raft, supported by inflated skins, but barks, provided expressly for the purpose, and offering every convenience at which the mature art of the Romans had yet arrived. Without question, the young Roman and his followers were admitted into one of the boats, and in a few minutes were landed on the other side of the Danube, in the midst of all that hurry, bustle, and luxurious activity which marked the precincts of a Roman city, even in a remote province, and in the immediate vicinity of those barbarian allies who were soon destined to overwhelm all those soft and splendid scenes in blood and ashes.

The Roman dress and air of Theodore and his two freedmen enabled them to pass on unquestioned through the gates; where a few soldiers, with their spears cast idly down, their helmets laid aside, and their swords unbraced, sat gaming in the sun, offering a sad but striking picture of the decay of that discipline which had once so speedily won, and had so long preserved, the dominion of the world. Gaily

and tunefully carolled the flower-girl, as she tripped along with her basket full of wreaths and garlands for the festal hall or the flowing wine cup; loudly shouted, with the ready cyathus in his hand, the seller of hot wine in the Thermopolium; eagerly argued the lawyer and the suitor as they hurried along to the tribunal of the duumvir; gaily laughed the boys, as, followed by a slave bearing their books, they hastened homeward from the school. Splendid dresses, fair faces, magnificent shops, and chariots with tires of gold and silver, litters, with cushions stuffed with the flowers of the new blown rose, met the eye of Theodore in every direction; and as he looked on all this luxury and magnificence, and compared it with the scenes he had just quitted, he could not help asking himself, "And is this Margus? Is this the city daily threatened by barbarian enemies? Is this the extreme point of civilisation, upon the very verge of woods and wilds, and hordes of savage Scythians?"

At the end of a wide open space, towards the centre of the town, rose one of those beautiful peristyles,—less light, but perhaps more impos-

ing, than the Greek—whereof so many had been constructed under Hadrian. Within it appeared a massy temple, formerly dedicated to Jupiter, but now consecrated to that purer faith destined to remain unsullied through everlasting ages, notwithstanding the faults, the follies, and the vices of some of its ministers.

At the moment that the young Roman entered the forum, the mingled crowd of worshippers was descending the steps of the temple; and above them, between the two central pillars of the portico, clothed in his sacerdotal robes, and with his extended hands giving his blessing to the people, stood a tall and princely form, in which Theodore instantly recognised the Bishop of Margus, the brother of his father.

Dismounting from his horse, the young Roman waited for a moment, until the crowd had in some degree dispersed, and then, ascending the steps towards the door through which his uncle had retired into the church, he asked a presbyter, who was still lingering on the threshold, if he could speak with the bishop.

“ You will find him at his dwelling, my son,”

replied the presbyter : “ he has passed through the church, and has gone to his mansion, which lies just behind it.”

Theodore took the direction in which the presbyter pointed with his hand ; and, followed by Cremera and the other freedman, reached the entrance of a splendid dwelling, round the doors of which stood a crowd of poor clients, waiting for the daily dole of bread and wine. Theodore found some difficulty, however, in obtaining admission to his uncle’s presence. “ He is gone to divest himself of his sacred robes,” one slave replied ; “ he is busy in private devotion,” asserted another ; a third plainly refused to admit the stranger unless previously informed of his name and purpose.

“ Tell the bishop,” said Theodore, “ that it is a Roman from Constantinople, who brings him tidings of his friends, which it much imports him to hear as soon as may be.”

There was the accent of command in the young Roman’s speech, which made the slave hasten to obey ; and in a moment after the curtain, beneath which he had passed in order

to communicate the message to the bishop, was drawn back, and Theodore found himself in the presence of his uncle.

The prelate gazed upon him for a moment in silence. It is probable that at first he did not recognise the boy, whom he had not seen for several years, in the young man that now stood before him ; and yet that faint and twilight recollection—more like the act of perception than of remembrance—by which old impressions first break upon us, before memory has time distinctly to trace out the particulars, caused the shades of manifold emotions to pass over his countenance, as his eyes remained fixed on the face of his nephew.

“Theodore!” he exclaimed at length, “Theodore! what in the name of Heaven has brought you here at this hour, and under these circumstances? Know you not that the barbarians demand my life to expiate the sins of others? Know you not that they threaten to seek me even here, and sate their vengeance in the blood of my flock, if I be not given up to them? Know you not that the weak emperor,

after having faintly refused their horrible demand, now hesitates whether he should yield his innocent subject, and the teacher of his people, to the barbarous hands of his enemies? What was your father thinking of to send you here? unless, indeed, he be bringing six legions to my aid, and you be but the harbinger of the coming succour."

"Alas, my uncle," replied Theodore mournfully, "no such tidings have I to tell; nevertheless my tidings are not few, nor of little import; but let us speak of them alone. Here there are many ears around us; and you may perchance find it expedient to consider well what I have to say ere you make it public."

As he spoke, he glanced his eye towards the crowd of slaves and officers who filled the other end of the hall in which they stood; and the bishop, who had been moved to indiscretion by the sudden appearance of his nephew, resumed the caution, which, though a bold, ambitious man, formed part of his natural character, and, making a sign with his hand, said merely,

“ Follow me.” As he spoke, he led the way through the great hall to a small room beyond, from which a flight of steps descended to a beautiful garden, laid out in slopes, and adorned with many a statue and many a fountain. The curtain, drawn back between it and the hall, exposed to the view any one who approached on that side, while on the other the terraces lay open to the eye, so that nought with a step less stealthy than that of Time himself could approach unperceived.

“ Here, my nephew, here,” said the bishop, “ our secret words will not pass beyond our own bosoms. Tell me what brings you hither at a moment of such earnest difficulty—at a moment when I know not whether the base emperor may not deliver me up to the barbarian Attila. I who have abandoned all—state, dignity, the paths of ambition and of glory—to devote myself to the service of God and his holy church. Yet tell me, first, how fares your father, how fares my noble brother? Why wrote he not in answer to my letter beseeching him to use his power with Theodosius in my behalf?”

“ I come,” replied Theodore — who, judging that the bishop’s questions regarding Paulinus were but formal words of no very deep meaning, proceeded at once to the point on which his uncle’s curiosity was really excited, — “ I come, my uncle, to seek refuge and shelter with you, against the anger of a base weak monarch. Three days’ journey behind me is your cousin, Julia Flavia, with her children and my sister. Persecuted by Theodosius for no fault committed, we thought that if we could find shelter in the world it would be with my uncle at Margus.”

“ Safety at Margus!” cried the prelate, in truth affected by the earnest and pleading tone in which his nephew spoke, — “ safety at Margus! Oh, Theodore, Theodore! Is there safety to be found on board a sinking ship? Is there safety to be found between the opposing spears of two hostile armies met in battle? You come to me at a time when I know not whether the next moment may continue to afford security to myself. You come to me at a moment when my soul is trembling—though not with fear;—

No, but wavering with uncertain purposes, like a loosened sail quivering in the blast of the tempest, uncertain to which side it may be driven, or whether it may not be torn in fragments from the mast. You come to me in such a moment as this for refuge? But could not your father protect you—my great, my warlike, my courtly, my all-powerful brother, who despised the poor-spirited priest, and thought the robe and stole the refuge of a low ambition? O Paulinus, Paulinus! how I could have loved you!—Yet what do I say, Theodore? your dark robe! your untrimmed hair! your jewelless garments!—Tell me, boy, tell me, where is your father?”

“Alas,” replied Theodore, “I have no father. He who was my father is dead, murdered by the Emperor!”

The living lightnings of fierce indignation flashed from the priest's proud eyes; and after pausing for a moment, as if unable to give voice to the feelings that struggled in his breast for utterance, he shook his hand towards the sky, to which his eyes were also raised, exclaiming,

“ Tyrant, thou hast sealed thy fate!” then, casting himself down upon a couch, he drew his robe over his head, and Theodore could hear him weep. The youth was moved; and at length he took his uncle’s hand in his, and pressed his lips upon it, saying, “ I knew not that you loved him thus.”

“ Yes, Theodore, yes!” replied the bishop; “ I did love him, better than he knew, better than I knew myself till this very hour. We had different tempers, we chose opposite paths, we held opposite opinions. That which I thought wisdom, he would misname craft; that which I held as just, he would taunt as base. We were both, perhaps, ambitious, but in different ways; and his ambition led him to condemn mine; and yet, Theodore, and yet, I loved him better than any other human being. When I strove for eminence in the state which I had chosen, when I raised my voice and made the proud to bow, the sinner to tremble, piety to kindle into enthusiasm, and devotion to reach its highest pitch, my first imagination was what Paulinus would think; my first hope to tower

above his low opinion. He was the object and the end of many of my best and greatest actions: almost every thought of my life has had some reference to him. I have disputed, opposed, quarrelled with him,—nay, even hated him, and yet belied my own heart, by loving him still!”

The bishop paused, and, crossing his arms upon his broad chest, fixed his eyes upon the sky, and remained for several minutes in gloomy silence, as if summoning up before the eye of memory all the visions of the past. “Theodore,” he continued at length, speaking in a rambling, musing tone, “Theodore, I will be to you as a father. What my fate may be, I know not; but my brother’s murderer shall never deliver me up to the power of the barbarians. Do you mark me? He shall learn that, deprived of the just defence of my sovereign, I can defend myself. But it matters not! You are too young for such counsels! Paulinus, my brother, thou art dead; but thou shalt be avenged. The cup of wrath wanted but one drop to make it overflow, and thy murder has poured an ocean into it. Now

tell me, Theodore, — the Lady Flavia, where is she? She shall be welcome to Margus. Within these walls my power is unlimited. The people and their magistrates are equally my flock and my servants; so that I can assure a welcome to those who seek it. Where is Flavia? Why came she not with you?"

"Because tidings reached us every day," replied Theodore, "of messengers sent from Constantinople, bearing orders for our arrest — perhaps for our death. Three of these messengers, we learned, had taken the way to Margus; and ere we could venture to trust ourselves here, I came on to see whether the power of my uncle could give us shelter and security."

A smile of bitter meaning gleamed over the countenance of the bishop. "Three messengers!" he said, — "three messengers, bearing orders for your arrest or death! No later than yesterday morning, three Byzantines — for so part of their dress bespoke them — were found, slain by the Huns, as it appeared, near Tricornium, higher up the river. Perchance these

have been the messengers, and have delivered their just and clement letters to the wrong hands."

"It is not unlikely," replied Theodore. "They must have been near that town early in the morning of yesterday; for I had news of their course, and crossed the Danube, lest, with fresh horses, and perhaps a guard from that station, they might overtake and seize me."

"They have been seized themselves," said the prelate, setting his teeth close. "The smiter has been smitten; the messenger of death has found death himself. But how escaped you the Huns yourself, bold youth? For the last month they have made excursions across the river, destroying wherever they came. How was it that you, who without permission entered their own land, past through them in perfect safety?"

"In truth I know not," replied Theodore, "unless it was that I began by speaking to the ferrymen in the Alan tongue."

"That has saved you," replied the prelate; "but now, my son, we must not lose time."

These are days of danger, when the very air is full of winged death. We must not leave the Lady Flavia and her children one moment longer unprotected than is needful. Tell me with what company she travels. Ye were not, I trust, obliged to fly in such haste as to leave all your domestics behind."

"Oh no!" replied Theodore; "the tribune Marcian, who brought us the sad tidings of my father's fate, and warned us of our own danger, took care that all the slaves should accompany us; and saw that all the gold and jewels, either belonging to Flavia, or which my father had left in Illyria, should be borne with us, to escape the greedy hands of Theodosius. Thank God, we have enough to support us with dignity till this storm be blown away, and the sun shines once more."

"Alas, Theodore!" replied the priest, "seldom is it with man that the sun, once clouded, ever shines again. The bosom of nature, torn by the tempest, soon recovers its gaiety and its beauty, or, swept by the shower, wakes up again in brighter loveliness; but the heart of

man, beaten by the storms of fate, never regains its freshness, but is dulled and withered by every drop that falls, and revives not again till his short day is closed. But I will send out to greet Flavia, and bid her welcome. Glad am I that she brings with her wealth and attendants. Not that I could not myself have supplied her with all she might need ; for, thanks be to Him who gave, my worldly wealth is great — greater than is perhaps good for securing the treasure in heaven. Nevertheless, all our wealth may not be more than sufficient for the purpose that I have in view. I will send out to find her, and bring her hither.”

“Nay, my uncle,” replied Theodore, “I will myself be the messenger. She will not give herself to the guidance of any one, if I do not return. I am not weary ; and an hour or two of rest would enable me, had I but fresh horses for myself and the freedmen, to seek her at once. This bank of the river, by the death of these messengers, is now free, and the way is shorter.”

His uncle made some opposition on the plea

of his nephew's youth, and yet unconfirmed strength, but that opposition was slight, and soon overcome. There was, indeed, an eagerness, a haste, an impetuosity, in the Bishop's whole demeanour, which betokened a keen and ambitious mind struggling with difficulties and dangers, which he feared not, but estimated at their true value. He seemed, to the eyes of Theodore, like a skilful swordsman contending with a multitude of enemies, with all his energies awake and active to avoid every blow, to parry every thrust, and to return upon his assailants their strokes with usury.

When at length he consented that his nephew should go, and gave him into the hands of one of his officers, with directions to provide for his repose and refreshment, what was the impression which his uncle's conduct had made upon Theodore's mind? The bishop had been kinder than he expected; he had evinced more affection for his father, more deep love for that dead parent whose memory was enshrined in the heart of Theodore, and revered as the relics of some pure and sainted

martyr ; he had shown more depth of feeling, and more of the energy of talent, than the youth had been taught to believe he could display ; and yet Theodore was not satisfied. The diamond touchstone of a pure and innocent heart, without an analysis, without minute investigation, detected at once the alloy which ran through the seeming gold : he saw that there was much of goodness, he saw that there was much of power, in his uncle's character ; but there wanted the simplicity, the mildness, the humility of the Christian priest : there were strong feelings without strong principles, high talents without high honour, and through all his best and brightest qualities ran a vein of brilliant selfishness, simulating nearly, in appearance, the more precious things with which it mixed ; but, oh ! how different in intrinsic value.

CHAP. X.

THE TREASON.

It was night ; but no bright moon compensated for the absence of the greater orb, and the air was dark, though the sky itself shone with all its innumerable sparks of golden light. It was one of those nights in which the depth of the heavens becomes apparent, in which each separate star is seen hanging distinct and apart from all the rest, a lamp of everlasting fire in the blue profound of space. The lately troubled waters of the Danube had become clear ; and flowing more calmly, though in a less volume, mirrored the splendid pageantry of heaven's resplendent host.

Within an hour, however, after the full setting of the sun had left the earth to the dominion of the night, another light than that of the stars was reflected from the waters of the rolling

stream at the distance of a few miles from the city of Margus. The glare of a multitude of torches flickered over the rolling stream, and cast a red unpleasing light over the rocks and trees amidst which the Roman road was cut from Tricornium to Margus. That light, too, shone upon the anxious and wearied countenances of those who, a little more than a month before, we have seen, set out from the spot where all their happy memories were left behind them to wander forward towards lands and fortunes that they knew not.

A change, however, had been effected in the appearance of many of that party. Young as he was, Theodore had shown a wisdom and prudence beyond his years; and as soon as they had lost the escort of the tribune Marcian, on the frontiers of Mœsia, he had selected twenty of the most faithful slaves, and had besought Flavia to liberate and arm them. His pretext was that, in approaching the barbarian countries, many dangers lay upon the way; but he did not say that even against the authority of the Emperor himself those arms might not be used.

Belated by the length and fatiguing nature of the way, many a timid glance was cast by Ildica and Eudochia towards the opposite bank of the stream, where lay shrouded in its dark woods the strange and dangerous country of the Huns. Many an apprehensive inquiry, too, went from lip to lip amongst the women slaves that followed; and, though each knew that the other was as ignorant of the land through which they were passing as herself, many a time was the question asked, "How far is it now to Margus," meeting still with the same unsatisfactory reply. At length Theodore, riding up from the rear of the line, where he had remained to see that no one lingered behind, approached the side of the lectula, in which Ildica was borne, and said, to the no small joy of all who heard him, "Lo! the arch of Trajan. To Margus is but one short mile."

That mile was soon accomplished; and at the gates of the city they were met by persons sent on purpose to welcome them, both by the magistrates and by the bishop of the town. Such friendly greeting in such a remote spot, the

sight of a populous and wealthy city, the cheerful sounds and objects which met the ear and eye in the streets, served to revive hope in the bosoms of that weary and anxious train, and to recall the images of warm domestic tranquillity, which had been banished during their dreary journey of the last two days : a house had been prepared for them, not far from the dwelling of the bishop, and they found, waiting their arrival, all those ready luxuries which the skill and ingenuity of the most pleasure-loving nation upon earth had devised in the most voluptuous period of the world's history. Baths were prepared ; wine cups crowned with garlands, and delicacies from remote lands, waited for the lip ; the softest triclinia surrounded the already spread table ; and the sound of sweet music was breathing through the atrium : odours floated on the air ; lights blazed through the halls ; and when at length Flavia, Ildica, Eudochia, Theodore, and Ammian stood in the midst of that enchanted scene — far from their enemies, with a place of certain refuge close at hand, and the long,

weary, perilous journey accomplished behind them — feelings of joy and thankfulness, great, irrepressible, overpowering, welled up from the deep fountain of the heart, and, casting themselves into each other's arms, they wept.

Many moments passed in those entrancing feelings; but when at length the bishop appeared to bid them welcome to a city over which his eloquence and powers of mind had given him greater influence than even the representative of the imperial authority possessed, Flavia had again resumed her calm and tranquil dignity. He would not sit down to meat with the guests, for whose entertainment he had provided so sumptuously, affecting an abstinence, which might or might not be habitual; but he insisted upon waiting in a neighbouring chamber while they supped, declaring that he had matter of some moment to communicate to the Lady Flavia. Simple in her habits, and encouraging simplicity in her children, Flavia was soon prepared to give the prelate that private hearing which he desired. He led her accordingly into another chamber, while Ammian

sported with Eudochia ; and Theodore, seated beside Ildica, tasted once more the sweet moments of love.

They were the only ones that they had known since the fatal night of the earthquake, since that night which had witnessed the first union of their hearts in the bond of spoken affection. In all their other meetings—in every other communication which they had yet had,—danger and terror, like the drawn sword in the eastern feast, had hung above their heads, and marred the tranquillity of their mutual hearts. Now, however, when apprehension was drowned in hope, they felt—and oh how dear was the feeling!—that the love, which had grown up in joy and peace, had been increased and strengthened, brightened and perfected, by dangers and misfortunes.

Theodore held Ildica's graceful hand in his, and gazed into those dark, dark lustrous eyes, reading therein a reply to all the intense and passionate love of his own ardent heart ; and Ildica, seated on the couch beside him, lifted the long sweet curtains of those gem-like orbs to the

countenance of her lover, and, with the mingled glance of timidity and confidence, seemed to pour forth the thanks of her fervent spirit, not only for all that he had done to soothe, to comfort, and to protect her, but for all the unspoken thoughts of love, the anxieties and fears concealed, the constant remembrance by day, the frequent dreams by night, — for all, in short, which her heart told her that his had felt in the hours of pain and care through which they had so lately passed. Low and murmured words read a comment on those looks, and Theodore and Ildica once more knew an hour of intense delight.

A large chamber intervened between that in which they sat and that to which her mother had retired to hold conference with the prelate, and the veils over both the doorways were drawn. For some time the voice of neither speaker was heard, but at length the tones grew higher. The low sweet murmur even of Flavia's tongue found its way to the hall where her children waited her return, and the high but harmonious tones of the eloquent priest sounded loud, and sustained, as if he were using all his powers of oratory upon some great

and inspiring theme. No distinct words, however, were heard, and then again, after a time, the voices once more sank low, and in a few minutes the bishop and the lady issued forth with hasty steps and agitated looks. The prelate was passing rapidly on, without noticing his brother's children, as if carried forward by some strong excitement; but ere he reached the doorway, his habitual self-command returned in a degree, and, turning round with a knitted brow but an air of dignity, he raised both his extended hands, saying, "Bless you, my children! the blessing of God be upon this house, and all that it contains." That done, he again turned upon his way, and rapidly quitted the apartment.

In the meanwhile, in the midst of that rich hall, stood Flavia, with her pale cheek flushed, her beautiful eyes wild and thoughtful, her fair hand pressed tight upon her broad statue-like brow, and her lip murmuring words which sounded vague and unmeaning, because the key to their sad interpretation was in her own bosom. At length she spoke:—"Hie thee to

repose, Eudochia," she said; "hie thee to repose, my sweet child. Ammian, too, seek rest, my boy, while thou mayst find it. Ye have had a weary journey, children, and God only knows when it may be renewed."

With some light and fanciful words from Ammian, breathing the spirit of bright untiring youth, some of the slaves were summoned, and the two younger members of that family, whose fate we have so long followed, retired to sleep. Flavia listened for their parting steps; but when all was quiet, she caught the hand of Theodore, exclaiming, "Oh, my son, have you known and consented to this?"

"Have I known what, dear mother?" demanded Theodore, who had hitherto mastered his surprise. "I have consented to nothing which should move my mother thus painfully."

"I believed it, Theodore, I believed it," replied Flavia. "In your veins and in mine flows the blood of those Romans who thought life a light sacrifice for their country, whose gore flowed like water for the defence and preservation of their native land; and I am

sure that if you be your father's son no danger, no injustice, will induce you to forget your duty, and bring upon the country of your birth the tide of barbarian warfare! Is it not so, my son?"

"It is!" answered Theodore; "but what mean you, my mother? We understand not to what your words apply."

But Flavia continued, turning to her daughter:—"And you, Ildica," she said, "tell me that you are my child indeed—that you would sacrifice life, and all life's dearest interests, rather than take part or benefit by, or instigate the ruin of, your country."

"I would, my mother, I would," replied Ildica, while her person seemed to grow taller, and her resemblance to her mother increased under the excitement of the moment. "I would sacrifice life, and, what is far dearer than life, I would sacrifice him," and she laid her hand upon the arm of Theodore. "I would rather see him die in defence of his country than live and prosper by its fall. Oh, my mother, you have judged your child rightly; the blood of my

father, spilt by the enemies of our native land, throbs in his daughter's heart; and even this weak hand, were there none other to assert our country, might yet strike one blow in her defence."

"My noble child," cried Flavia, throwing her arms around her daughter, "thou art worthy of thy race. Theodore, what think you that your uncle proposes to me to do? To throw wide the gates of Margus to the barbarians, to open the way for the Huns into the heart of the empire, to buy revenge for your father's death, and safety for ourselves, by the desolation of our native land, the destruction and ruin of our friends, and the massacre of our fellow-countrymen! Shame on such degenerate Romans! Shame, shame upon them to all eternity! Oh God, oh God! where are thy thunderbolts?"

Theodore stood, for a moment, as one stupified by the strange and fearful tidings he had heard; and fixing his eyes upon Flavia's face, he gazed upon her with an expression of inquiring doubt, which showed how far he was from any participation in the schemes or feelings of his uncle.

“ My mother,” he said at length, “ let us go hence. This is no refuge for us. Did he think by showing us here an image of that splendour and comfort which we so long possessed, and so lately lost — did he think to blind our eyes, and weaken our hearts, and destroy our virtue? My choice, oh, my mother, is made: give me honour and misery, if virtue cannot secure peace. Let us go hence.”

“ At sunrise to-morrow,” replied Flavia, “ we will depart; for I much fear that he told me not all; I doubt that his dealing with the Huns is far advanced.”

“ Why not at once, then?” demanded Theodore; “ to-morrow’s daylight may be too late.”

Flavia turned her eyes upon her daughter, who understood the glance, and answered at once, “ My mother, I can go, though I am wearied: were it not better to drop by the wayside than risk our future peace?”

But Theodore interposed:—“ No, no,” he said, “ an hour before daylight will be time enough. The slaves are wearied beyond all endurance; and perhaps, also, were we to attempt

it to-night, the guards might become suspicious, and stay us at the gates. To-morrow it will seem more natural. The wearied soldiers, at that hour, will let us pass without inquiry, and, following the course of the river, we can pass through Noricum, and take refuge either amongst my kindred of the Alani, or under the strong shield of Ætius, in Gaul, from whose protection, neither weak emperor dare attempt to snatch us. Rest thee, Ildica!" he added, throwing his arms around her,—“rest thee, my beloved; and rest thee, too, dear mother! I will see all prepared, and ready to set out an hour before the dawning of the day.”

“And thou, my poor Theodore,” said Flavia, “thou hast no rest!”

“Am I not a Roman?” was the youth’s reply.

On the next morning — while the city of Margus was still buried in slumber, and all vacant were those streets so lately thronged with the gay unthinking crowd pursuing with light heart the butterfly pleasure, and never dreaming that fate, like a lion, was

following fast upon its track—the same train which the night before had entered the gate with joy, now passed them again with sorrow, but without regret. Theodore had first presented himself, and had held a momentary conversation with a soldier on guard. The gates had then been opened by the janitor of the night, and the slaves, who led the train, passed out. Ildica and Eudochia followed; but as the litter of Flavia was borne forward, Theodore approached its side, and said, in a low voice, “They demand that one of us at least should stay to give account of our departure either to the bishop or the magistrates; I will keep Cremera and some others with me. In the mean time go you on, and I will join you speedily.”

Flavia turned an anxious look upon him, but he added, in a still lower tone, “Fear not; they dare not detain me;” and, motioning to the slaves who bore the litter to proceed, he drew back under the archway.

Their course lay to the westward; but as Theodore turned towards the city, a faint grey light

hung over the massy towers and columns of Margus, showing that the dawn of day was fast approaching. With a slow pace, and a sad but resolute heart, Theodore returned to the house which had been assigned to them as their dwelling; and, after a momentary pause, turned his steps on foot to the mansion of the bishop. The gates were already open, some of the slaves at work, and the light of the now dawning day was seen streaming faint and cold through the long range of vestibules and halls, from an open archway, beyond which appeared various groups of statues, fountains, and pillars, ornamenting a court-yard. Like all dependents on the great and powerful, keen to perceive who were in favour, who were influential with their lords, the slaves, who, a few days before, had obstructed the access of Theodore to his uncle, hastened to pay their court to one whom they now knew, and besought him with officious civility to repose himself there, till the bishop should have risen to receive him.

The mind of Theodore, however, was not in a state to permit him to take even cor-

poreal rest ; and he replied that he would walk forth into the court and amuse himself with the statues and fountains till his uncle was prepared to receive him. The cold and absent tone in which he spoke checked all intrusion ; and, meditating on his wayward fate, he walked forth alone, now pausing as if to contemplate some beautiful piece of sculpture, now gazing, as if with pleased attention, on the clear waters that, welling from the rocky ground on which the city was built, sparkled round the court in innumerable graceful urns and vases, but with his mind, in fact, employed on matters far different from the light elegancies and calm pleasures of life.

Thus absent and musing, he went on to a spot where a long flight of steps led down to the bottom of that terraced garden which he had beheld from above in his first conference with his uncle. Scarcely conscious of what he did, Theodore slowly descended the steps, and entered one of the long paved walks at the very lowest part of the garden. The right side was flanked by a strong

wall, in which were two or three doorways leading, as it would seem, to the pomærium, or open space between the town and its fortified walls—for the house itself was one of the farthest from the centre of Margus. Scarcely had he entered that path, however, when the sound of steps made him raise his eyes, and he beheld before him four dark figures—to see which, in that place, caused him suddenly to pause, and lay his hand upon his sword. Ere he could distinguish their faces, by the general aspect of their forms, he perceived that they were barbarians, free, and in a Roman city at that early hour. A moment more showed him that, while three of the party had mingled their barbarian dress of skins with jewels and ornaments of gold and silver, the fourth, who preceded the others as they advanced, retained the original simple habit of his nation, being clothed in plain but valuable furs and dark cloth, but of exceeding fineness. Those who followed bore about them many strange and barbarian arms, but he who preceded had nothing but a broad and heavy sword, composed solely of iron from its hilt

to its scabbard. In him Theodore instantly recognised the Hun who had been his guide on his last day's journey through the Dacian territory, and the same unaccountable feeling passed through his bosom which he had experienced on beholding him before. He saw too well, however, that Flavia's suspicions were correct, and that his uncle had already plunged irretrievably into those dangerous intrigues which were destined to prove not only the ruin of himself and of the city which yielded itself so tamely and entirely to his government, but far beyond that, to his whole native land; and indignation for a moment mastered all other sensations.

“What doest thou here, barbarian?” was his only greeting when they met.

“What is that to thee, youth?” rejoined the Hun, with a calm, haughty smile, such as may play upon a father's lip when he reproofs — though amused thereby — the frowardness of some spoiled child. “But speak thine own language,” he continued in a corrupt dialect of the Latin tongue; “speak thine own language:

weak and insignificant as it is, it will cover from the ears of those who hear us such light words as those thou hast just spoken."

"My words were not light, Hun," replied Theodore; "for every Roman may well demand what thou doest here, when he meets with armed barbarians in the heart of a Roman city."

"We are armed," said the Hun, "but we are few. What I do here is nought to thee; but if thou wilt listen to me, my coming may do thee service. I love thee for thy mother's father, and for her brother. They were my friends; and he who would be terrible to those who hate him must do good deeds to those who love him. Know that the Roman empire trembles to its fall. Attila, the king, has said it, and it will come to pass. He has said, 'I will sweep it as a cloud sweeps the tops of the forest. — I will pass over it as a storm,' he has declared, 'from one part even unto the other; and I will not leave it, so long as one Roman stands up before me to oppose me.' Attila, the king, has said it, and his words shall be made

true. Nevertheless, as thou art one of those who think that there is yet vigour in weakness, and strength in Rome, I bid thee consider what will be thy fate even should thine emperor be successful in resistance. The blood of thy father is upon his head; thou fleest from his vengeance, and he seeks thy life. Thus much have I learnt from thee and from thine uncle. Should Attila be successful, and thou not of his friends, thou perishest. Should Theodosius triumph, thinkest thou that he who has trodden upon the mighty, will spare the weak?"

"Hun!" said Theodore, taking a step forward to pass him, "could my blood, poured forth on the banks of yonder river, like the dragon's teeth of Cadmus, raise up an host of armed men to defend my native land against thee and against thy king, I would hold my throat to the knife, and die with gratitude and joy! Thinkest thou that such a one can be impelled by fear, or led by hope, to serve thee and to betray his native land?"

"I think," replied the Hun, "that thou mightest be a faithful friend to a worthier

monarch than thine own. Fare thee well! and remember, as I told thee when last we met: in future times, when the hands of fate shall have shaken from their places thrones and empires, and have changed the fate of little as well as great, shouldest thou need protection, thou wilt find it at the name of Onegisus. Now, forward to thine uncle; I must hence."

Without returning to the court, Theodore sprang up the terraces of the garden, towards the chamber where he had before conferred with the bishop. His hurried step caught the prelate's attention; and ere Theodore had reached the top his uncle's majestic form, clothed in his splendid robes, appeared in the doorway above, gazing down to see who it was that approached so rapidly.

"Theodore," he exclaimed, while an expression of pleasure and expectation lighted up his features, "I trust you are come to bear me good tidings, and that the Lady Flavia is not so rashly obstinate as when last I saw her."

"Far from it!" said Theodore, gravely, "I have come but to tell you that we remain

Romans to our death. All who entered the gates last night, except myself and a few slaves, are by this time an hour's journey on their way to Noricum."

"Rash woman! what has she done?" cried the bishop, clasping his hands; "she is lost, she is lost! Fly, Theodore, quick! Fly like the lightning! Bring her back hither; or if she will not come, lead her on the road to the south, any where but the road she has taken."

Theodore gazed upon the agitated countenance of his uncle in amazement; but the bishop continued, more vehemently than before, "Fly! do I not tell you to fly? Lose not a moment! breathe not a word! Away, as if a lion were behind you. The Huns are already across the river, on the very road she has taken. If she will not return hither, seek for no highway, look for no easy path, but plunge at once into the country, and hurry to the southward, making not a moment's pause!"

Without a word of reply, the youth darted through the vacant rooms, passed the gates of the dwelling, the Basilica, and the Forum;

reached the house where the horses and slaves remained, sprang upon his charger's back, and, followed by the rest, dashed out towards the walls of the city. The gates were open, but, to his surprise, no soldiers, no gate-keepers, were now there. The guard had been withdrawn for purposes which he too well divined ; and passing out unquestioned, he hurried on with the same frantic speed in search of those he loved.

CHAP. XI.

THE SEARCH.

HURRYING on without pause, and impressed with but the one overpowering thought of the danger of all he loved on earth, Theodore soon reached the banks of the Danube, and gazed onward upon the road which for several miles lay straight before him. But nothing met his sight, either to raise his hopes, or increase his apprehensions : all was open and clear, and not even a cart or a beast of burden from the country, no, not a single peasant bringing in his basket of fruit or flowers, arrested the eye, as it wandered down the long straight avenue. A pair of enormous eagles, whirling slowly round, high up in the blue morning sky, was the only sight of animated being that presented itself; the singing of a light bird, too lowly and insignificant to fear those majestic tyrants of the skies, and the dull

roar of the great river, were the only sounds that broke upon the ear.

Hope sets her quick foot wherever fear leaves the space vacant ; and Theodore trusted that Ildica might have passed on ere the Huns had crossed the river. He paused not, however, at the voice of the syren, but still urged on his horse, gazing anxiously forward, and listening for every sound. The five freedmen who had remained with him followed as fast as they could, but the superior power and swiftness of the young Roman's charger left a short but increasing interval between them. That interval was less, perhaps, than half a mile, when Theodore reached the wooded rocks, round whose immovable bases the road was forced to wind ; but his faithful Cremera saw him disappear behind them with apprehension, and urged on his horse with eager haste, till he and the rest had also turned the angle of the rocks, and once more beheld his master.

Theodore was now at less than a hundred yards' distance : he had dismounted, and, with the charger standing beside him, was

kneeling over some object which had attracted his attention on the road. When the freedmen came up, they too sprang to the ground, to look upon the sight which had stopped him. It was the body of one of their companions, who had been selected like themselves to bear arms upon the dangerous journey they had been forced to undertake. His spear was in his hand, with the iron red with blood, and in his heart was fixed a reed arrow, such as some of the Scythian nations used in their wars.

Theodore pointed in silence to the corpse, gazed for a moment round, and followed with his haggard eye the long track of the road, apparently to discover if any new object of horror lay before him; and then, after once more looking sternly upon the dead man, he shook his sword from the sheath, sprang again upon his horse, and galloped on his way. As he went, however, his eye searched anxiously on the ground for farther traces regarding the too evident fate which had befallen Flavia and her company; nor was he without finding such marks: the ground was dented and beaten with horses' feet, and stains of blood here and there showed that there had

been a contest of a fierce and desperate kind on the spot over which he passed.

Scarcely three hundred yards from the place where lay the body of the freedman, a small road turned off to the left, leading down through the woods, with which that part of the country was thickly strewn, to the banks of the river Margus, higher up than the city. At that point, too, the traces—which had hitherto marked so plainly the course which those he sought for had pursued—no longer afforded him a clue, for, separating as it were into two distinct streams, the footmarks of the horses went on in either track, leading, on the one hand, towards Tricornium, and, on the other, into the thinly-peopled and half-cultivated country towards Illyria.

He paused in doubt ; and the agony of impatience, even at a moment's delay, was only equalled by that of apprehension, lest he should mistake the path, as he turned from one to the other. However, the sun just rising above the trees that fringed the bank suddenly poured a stream of light upon the left-hand road, and the rays caught and glittered on some shining substance, which lay at about a bow-shot dis-

tance. Theodore darted forward, and his doubts were removed at once; for that which accidentally flashed back the sunshine to his eye was the collar of emeralds which he himself had borne to Ildica from his father Paulinus. He hesitated no longer, but hurried on; and ere he had proceeded more than a quarter of an hour, the sound of voices and the neigh of horses told him that his speed had brought him near to those he had pursued.

What was his purpose? he himself scarcely knew: it was vague, undefined, uncertain: it might be to save, it might be to live or die with those whom he loved.

The spot where he then stood was a wooded covert, near the brow of a high hill which, sloping down on the other side beyond him, left the forest on its summit, and stretched into natural meadows, covering the bottom of a sweet and tranquil valley. He knew not, however, what was the scene beyond the brow; but he heard voices and barbarian tongues, and was hurrying on to meet the fate in store for him, whatever that store might be, when the figure of a woman darted through the wood; and

Flavia, pale and sad as a statue on a tomb, stood by his horse's side, and threw her arms up to clasp him as he sat.

"My children! my children!" she cried, "Oh, Theodore! my children are in the power of the Huns!"

"Where?" demanded Theodore; and his fierce and flashing eye, and knit determined brow, told that he was prepared to do those deeds which were once common among the children of his native land: "Where?" he demanded, and it was the only word he spoke.

"Down in yon meadow," replied Flavia, "over the brow of the hill. But listen:—oh God! they might yet be saved, if we had but fleet horses: there are few of the barbarians with them; those few are revelling at their morning meal: the rest are gone to pursue the party from Tricornium."

"What party?" cried Theodore: "is there a chance of any aid?"

"Alas, no! my son," she replied, in the same rapid tone; "alas, no! We met a centurion and his soldiers coming from Tricornium to Margus, and while we were in parley

with him the barbarians suddenly fell upon us, like a cloud of brown locusts upon the fertile land: there was resistance and strife, and I sought to flee with the children. I know not how it happened; for it was like struggling with the waves of a tempestuous sea,—all terrible, and nothing distinct: but at length, when I could discern any thing, I found myself alone, defended by Acer, the freedman, against a single Hun, who lingered behind to seize upon me as his prey, while the greater body of his companions pursued the centurion along the high road, and a few hurried down hither with their captives and plunder. Though wounded, the freedman defended me as if he had been a Roman, and struck the fierce barbarian with his spear a blow that made him fly; but as he galloped off, he drew his bow, and in a moment an arrow was in Acer's heart. I was alone; my children were in captivity; and I followed hither; for I had only sought to save myself with them, but not to live without them."

Theodore sprang to the ground. "My mother," he said, "I will deliver them or die;"

and making the freedmen dismount, he chose four to follow him, leaving the Arab Cremera to remain with Flavia. His orders were few, but they were distinct. "When Eudochia, Ammian, Ildica, are here," he said, addressing the freedman, "mount them and the Lady Flavia on the horses: speed back to Margus, and bid the bishop save them at any price. Should you find the city in the hands of the Huns, pronounce the name of Onegisus, and when you have found him, tell him, that the youth Theodore, to whom he made a promise, claims his protection for those who are most dear to him on earth.—Mother," he continued, embracing Flavia, "mother, I go!"

Flavia gazed mournfully in that sad, firm countenance. "Theodore," she said, pressing him in her arms, "Theodore, thou goest to destruction!"

He made no reply, but wrung her hand; and, waving to the slaves he had chosen to follow, burst from her embrace, and hurried over the hill.

In another moment, the resting-place of the Huns was before his eyes, though the

branches of the trees still waved between him and them, affording concealment while he observed them. He paused but for an instant, but that instant sufficed to show him the barbarians scattered on both sides of the stream, gathered in groups of eight or ten, with their small rugged horses feeding beside them, and their weapons cast upon the turf whereon they sat. The heart of Theodore rose to see that they were so few, for not more than two hundred were there ; and the number of the captives, who sat apart, with bending heads, and the self-neglecting look of utter despair, had their arms been free, might have offered no slight support in the bold attempt he was about to make. “ Our object,” he said, turning to those who followed him, “ is to free Ildica, Eudochia, and Ammian. Let whoever reaches them first cut their bonds, and bid them fly up the road over the hill. Then free your fellows, and oppose the pursuit of the barbarians ! Thou art pale,” he added, addressing one of the freedmen ; “ thy lips are bloodless ; if thy heart be faint, turn back.”

“Thou goest to death,” replied the man firmly, “and I will go with thee. I feel that death is horrible; but it must be borne once, and I can bear it now.”

“Follow, then!” said Theodore, “but cautiously, under the covering of the trees, till we are close upon them.”

It was a great, a mighty, a sublime thing, that determined resolution unto death, which possessed the young enthusiastic Roman; which did away boyhood, and made him at once a strong and valiant man in vigour, in powers, in intellect, in energy. To die for her he loved; to ransom her from the barbarians, at the price of his own blood; to see her for the last time as her deliverer, and to know in dying that his hand had freed her; was the last aspiration, the only remaining hope that rested with Theodore, of all the many sweet and probable dreams of happiness which haunted his fancy but one short month before.

Calmly and deliberately he led the way through the trees, to a spot where, with irregular sweeps, the forest met the meadow.

Within fifty yards sat Ildica and her companions, mourning, like the enslaved Hebrews, their captivity, by the banks of the strange waters. Beside them, as a sort of guard — though the bonds by which they were tied rendered their unassisted escape impossible — lay spread upon the grass some ten or twelve of the dark and filthy barbarians, with their rude and frightful countenances, scared with ancient gashes and sallow with long-accustomed dirt, distorted by wild merriment, as they feasted near the first captives whom they had taken in their invasion of the Roman state. At the feet of one who sat closest to the prisoners lay a gory human head, the short cut hair and beard of which showed that it had belonged to no barbarian form; and — while Theodore, pausing behind the trees, let his eye run over the other groups of Huns, as they were scattered about at a greater distance, some eating and drinking, some playing with their unbridled horses, some erecting tents of skins, as if their numbers were soon to be greatly increased — the fierce barbarian ended some speech in his own tongue by a wild and

ringing laugh, and with a stroke of his foot kicked the trunkless head into the river.

It was the signal for his own destruction. "On!" cried Theodore, "on!" and, with the sudden stoop of the eagle on its prey, he bounded forward upon the barbarian. The Hun started on his feet, but that instant the sword of the young Roman cleft him to the eyes; and rolling back in the convulsive agonies of death, he plunged into the river, where he had so lately cast the head of his adversary.

Scarcely was the blow struck when it was followed by another, which laid a second Hun prostrate and disabled at his feet: two more fell before the spears of the freedmen; and the rest, conceiving that much greater numbers of enemies must be approaching, fled to their comrades further down the stream. There was a thirst in Theodore's heart to pursue and smite them still, but he remembered Ildica, and turned to where she sat. A moment freed her from her bonds: Eudochia and Ammian were set at liberty.

"Up! up! over the hill, beloved," cried

Theodore: "quick as light, Ildica! No words! you will find horses ready.—Cut their bonds quick," he continued, mingling his orders to the freedmen who had accompanied him, and to the captives as they were liberated. "Snatch up what arms you can find! There are the swords, and arrows, and javelins they have left behind. Fly, Ildica! I beseech you fly!—Ammian, hurry her and Eudochia up the hill; your mother is there with horses; we follow in a moment. Quick! quick! see the barbarians are pouring back upon us! form a phalanx across the road! Away, away! for God's sake! for my sake! Away, my Ildica!"

There was no time for further words; the Huns were upon them: but happily for Theodore, thirsty for immediate vengeance, they poured upon him with the sword and spear, instead of trusting to the missiles which they might have used with more fatal effect. Supported by twenty of the most resolute slaves and freedmen, some hastily equipped with the arms they had snatched up, some heaving masses of stone, the young Roman, active and

skilful in the use of all the weapons of the day, barred the path between the Huns and their liberated captives, and met them with a courage and a fierceness even superior to their own. Every tree, every broken mass of rock, formed a point of resistance ; and, though hurled against him with still increasing rage and impetus, the Huns recoiled, like javelins cast against a rock, leaving some of their number dead, or dying at his feet.

Each moment, however, their numbers increased, as the scattered parties from the different spots of that wide meadow hurried up to the scene of conflict ; and Theodore, grim with the blood of many enemies, but, alas ! not unstained with his own, slowly retired step by step towards the spot where the road entered the wood. There he had resolved to make his last stand and die ; but ere he reached it, a broad tremendous form, which had just come up from the farther part of the meadow mingled with his assailants, and, armed like himself with a heavy sword, seemed to single him out for destruction. His countenance, however, was

nobler than that of the Huns in general, as his height was greater; and when Theodore heard him exclaim, in a tongue near akin to the Alan language, "Leave him to me! leave him to me!" he thought that, if he must die, it might be sweeter by his hand.

Still, however, he contended with him with but little disadvantage; for, as a Roman, he had greater skill, if the barbarian had greater strength. Brow to brow, and hand to hand, blow following blow, and thrust succeeding thrust, they stood almost alone, while the youth's companions were driven back; and with flashing eyes and slow irregular breath, pursued the lightning chances of the combat. Neither had gained a step, though Theodore's blood was trickling fast away, when a wild scream from the hill above caught his ear, unnerved his heart, and brought dim despair of his last dearest desire's result, like a dark cloud before his eyes.

He turned but for an instant to listen to that sound, but that instant was enough. His guard was beaten down; he fell upon his

knee: though hope had abandoned him, courage had not, and he strove to struggle up, but it was in vain: his mighty adversary poured blow after blow upon the weak defence which his sword could now afford. He rose, fell again, staggered even upon his knee; exposed the arm which held the weapon over his head to the descending stroke of his enemy; dropped the sword itself from his disabled hand, and saw the shining steel, thirsting for his heart's last drop, raised high in air above his defenceless head. The hour he had expected had arrived, and he was prepared to die!

As with quick and heavy sweep the blow fell with a vehemence, which he himself who struck it could not restrain, another weapon interposed, caught the keen blade upon one no less strong, and turned the stroke aside.

“Spare him, Ardarc! spare him!” cried the deep tones of a voice that Theodore had heard before. “Spare him, for love of me!”

The young Roman started on his feet, and gazed wildly round upon the scene about him. When last he had time to look around, nothing had been seen but some two hundred Huns

contending with himself and his small faithful band. Now sweeping round in a semicircle which hemmed him in, down to the very river's brink, was seen an innumerable multitude of those dark ferocious horsemen, while thousands on thousands more appeared streaming down from the road, and spreading themselves out over the whole meadow.

The space, for nearly forty cubits, immediately about himself and his adversary, was clear, except where stood beside him the same dark chief who had been his guide on the other side of the Danube, and where, a pace or two behind, a barbarian attendant held the powerful horse from which he had just sprung. But as Theodore gazed along the dusky line of savage foes around him, a sight more painful to his heart than the impending death which had just hung over him, struck his eyes. There, where a multitude of banners, rudely embroidered with a black eagle crowned, marked a particular spot in their irregular line, stood Flavia and her family, once more in the hands of the barbarians!

But the hope of still purchasing their safety followed instantly upon the agony of that sight. Theodore at once cast himself at the feet of the Hunnish chieftain. "Oh, Onegisus!" he exclaimed, "oh, noble Onegisus! Thou hast promised me, unasked, thy favour and protection. Now, for the first time that I have ever required a boon at the hands of man, I beseech thee to grant me one. Let this brave man, from whose arm thou hast just saved me, plunge his sword into my heart! But let yon women and children, bound to me by the ties of blood and love, go free! Send them, oh send them, to the dwellings of my mother's race, beneath the snowy Alps, where they may find safety and protection! I adjure thee, by the God in whom I believe! I adjure thee, by the gods whom thou thyself worshippest! Spare them, oh, spare them, and send them forth in peace!"

The dark chieftain gazed upon him for a moment with an aspect stern but not fierce.

"Ardaric," he said at length, "he is the captive of thy hand. Wilt thou give him unto

me, and the first ten captives that I make they shall be thine ? ”

The other chieftain, whose brow had relaxed from the stern frown of contest, and on whose face was a mild and not unpleasing smile, thrust his sword back into the scabbard, saying, “ I give them to thee all, oh, mighty king ! I give them to thee, without recompense or bargain. Let them be the first spoil taken in the land of the Romans, which Ardarc offers to Attila the king.”

At that tremendous name, already shadowed over with a cloud of vague but fearful rumours of wide lands conquered, kings bent to homage, and nations, as savage as that over which he ruled, overthrown by that mighty hand, Theodore drew a step back, and gazed with doubt and surprise on the dark features and sinewy limbs of him who had just saved his life ; and if his feelings had been strange and mysterious when he had first seen that powerful but ill-proportioned form, what were they now, when he heard the stranger called by that fearful name !

“ I am Attila ! ” said the monarch, answering his wondering and inquiring look. “ What sayest thou now, young man ? If I will send these women and slaves free, and on their way, wilt thou be the bondman of Attila ? ”

“ Oh, not a bondman ! ” said Theodore, letting his head droop upon his bosom : “ I can die, oh, monarch ! but I cannot be a bondman ! Let him slay me, and let them go free ; but bind not the limbs of a free Roman ! ”

Attila gazed on him awhile with the same grave, majestic air which he had never lost, even for a moment, and then added, “ I understand thee : I will not bind thy hands ; I will not demand thy service against thy native land — thou shalt draw no sword for Attila against Rome — thou shalt fill no servile employ — honoured and caressed, thou shalt be the friend of Attila, and if thou showest the same wisdom in other matters as in this, thou shalt be his counsellor also. Not his first friend — not his first counsellor,” he added, “ for here stands Ardoric, whose place none can supply ; and yonder is Onegisus, found

faithful in all things — but thou shalt be amongst the first. Hearken, thou shalt promise me for seven years to be to me a faithful friend and counsellor — except in war or counsel against thy native land; and I will send these thy people upon their way, with the king's pledge for their safety till they reach the land of thy kindred."

"Surely the king has some secret motive!" exclaimed Ardarc, king of the tributary, or rather subject, nation of the Gepidæ,—“Surely the king has some secret motive for showing this favour to a captive—though the boy is brave!"

"I have, Ardarc!" replied Attila, "I have! There is a strange bond between me and him—but that matters not.—Wilt thou accept the offer, youth?"

"I will!" replied Theodore; "but cannot they go with me?" and he pointed with his hand to Flavia and her companions.

"Thou knowest not what thou askest?" cried the king, with a cloud darkening on his brow. "It were evil with them, and not good, to

go. I will send them in safety and in honour to the land of the Alani, if thou wilt be as obedient to my commands as a son to a father's during seven years, except in the things which are against thy country: — dost thou accept the terms ?”

“ I do,” replied Theodore, “ I do ; and deep and heartfelt gratitude will I ever show to thee, oh, monarch, for thus befriending me in my hour of need !”

“ For seven years !” said the monarch, gazing up, thoughtfully, towards the sky, while the light of wild but mighty aspirations illuminated his harsh but striking features, — “ for seven years ! Ere seven years have fled, I shall have conquered the whole earth !”

CHAP. XII.

THE PARTING.

A SILENT pause of several minutes ensued, while the terrible monarch of the Huns thus suffered to burst forth so clear an indication of his hopes and purposes; and as he stood in the midst, still gazing up to the sky, with each firm and powerful limb in statue-like repose, his feet planted on the earth, as if rooted to it, his broad chest thrown open, and his wide square forehead lifted to the morning sun, there was an air of might and majesty in his whole appearance which impressed those who beheld him with a belief in his power to accomplish fully that which he so boldly planned. Though far less in height than the chief of Gepidæ, yet Ardaric gazed upon him with reverence and awe; and Theodore as he beheld him, and traced the light of potent intellect flashing from those

dark eyes, while his lip pronounced his vast designs, could not but feel that there stood the most dangerous enemy that Rome had ever known.

At length Attila recalled his thoughts from those dreams of conquest, and, waving his hand towards the spot where the standards of his nation were gathered together, he exclaimed, in a voice which, though not apparently loud, came deep and distinct to every ear around, "Edicon! Edicon, come hither!"

A tall dark man, with the shrewd face of a Greek, but the air and expression of a barbarian, sprang from his horse, and advanced a pace or two into the open space around the king: but as he came forward, Attila bade him bring the principal captives with him; and pale, faint, and sick at heart, Flavia and her family, uncertain either of their own fate or of his, so closely, so dearly linked with them, approached the spot where the dark monarch stood with his naked sword still clasped in his sinewy hand. As they came near, the joy of having saved them burst all restraint; and Theo-

dore, though the blood was still dropping from his garments, clasped them one by one in a brief but joyful embrace.

“ You are safe, my mother ! ” he cried, “ you are safe, my Ildica ! — Ammian, Eudochia, you are safe ! you are safe, and at liberty ! The king will send you securely to the land of the Alani.”

“ And you, my son, are a slave ! ” said Flavia. “ You are a slave, and we shall never see you more ! ”

“ Not so ! ” said Attila, gazing upon the group, and somewhat moved by their meeting. “ He is no slave, but has bound himself to dwell with Attila not less than seven years. Neither do I ask him to war against his country, it would be doing wrong unto his nature ; but I ask him to be a faithful and true friend, to him who has saved his life, in every other thing. Edicon, thou art a scribe : write down this compact between Attila the king, and Theodore the son of Paulinus, in order that no one may ever doubt that he did not betray his native land, or that Attila could not be generous to his enemy.”

He spoke in the Latin tongue ; and though he used not that language with ease, yet his meaning was distinct, and Flavia replied,—“ Act ever thus, oh, monarch ! and thou shalt conquer more by thy generosity than by the sword ! ” A hope might, perhaps, have crossed her mind, even while she spoke, that in so free and kindly a mood the monarch of the Huns might be induced to suffer her and her children to take up their abode in the same land with Theodore ; but she thought of Ildica, of her young blossoming beauty, of her tender nurture, and her graceful mind, and she repressed the wish ere it was spoken : all she added was, “ Oh, keep him not from us for ever ! ”

“ I have pledged and plighted my word,” replied the king, “ that in seven years he shall be free to leave me if he will. More : if he show himself as faithful to me as he has been to his country, he shall, from time to time, have leave and opportunity to visit those he loves. But I have mightier things to think of now,” he continued : “ wait ye here, till I provide for your safety. Ardarc, come thou with

me ; I go to tread upon the necks of the Romans." Thus saying, he sprang upon his horse, and issued a few brief commands in the Hunnic tongue. The dark masses of the barbarian horse began to move on by the river side, as if towards Idimum ; and while they swept along, like the shadow of a cloud over a field of green corn, the monarch continued conversing with his attendant, Edicon, without farther notice of the captives. At length, when Theodore saw him about to depart, he ventured to ask, " Go you to Margus, oh, king ? "

Attila looked upon him with a smile so slight that it scarcely curled his lip, and replied, " Margus was mine ere I came hither ! — My people are skilful in dressing wounds," he added ; " let them tend thine, for thou art bleeding still."

As he spoke, he raised his hand slightly on the bridle of his horse ; the beast sprang forward across the meadow, and, followed by a troop of Huns who had remained upon the left, Attila galloped on in the same direction which his host had taken before him.

Only two bodies of barbarians continued upon the field; one, consisting of perhaps an hundred men, remained with Edicon, near the spot where Theodore and his companions stood; the other, fewer in number, were gathered farther down in the meadow, near which the struggle between Theodore and the Huns for the deliverance of the captives had first commenced. A glance showed the young Roman that they were in the act of removing, or burying, the dead; but objects of deeper interest called his attention elsewhere, for Flavia, Eudochia, Ammian, Ildica, gathered round him gazing in his face, pale as it was with loss of blood, and looking upon him with the thankful eyes of beings whom he had delivered from bondage worse than death. How he had delivered them, by what means, or by what motives in the breast of the Hun that deliverance had been accomplished, was strange and incomprehensible to them all, even to Theodore himself; but that it was by his agency, on account of his valour, constancy, and faithfulness, none of them for a moment doubted; and as Ildica raised her large

dark eyes to his face, they were full at once of love, of admiration, and of gratitude.

Oh, who can tell the mingled feelings of that hour, when sitting round him they loved—while one of the rude Huns, with the peculiar appliances of his nation, stanchd the trickling blood, and dressed his many wounds — those who had lately given way to despair, now spoke to each other the few glad words of reviving hope ! Oh, who can tell the deep and fervid yearnings of the heart towards God in thankfulness for the mighty mercy just vouchsafed ! Oh, who can tell the thrilling, the ecstatic sense of security, of peace, and of happy expectation which succeeded, after having been plunged in such a depth of grief, of care, and agony !

What though their thoughts might wander on into the vague future, and sad experience might cause a fear to cast its shadow over the prospect ! What though Flavia's heart might feel a chilliness at the idea of strange lands, strange habits, and strange nations ! What though Ildica and Theodore might look upon a probable separation of seven long years with grief and regret ; yet oh how such pitiful

alloy sunk into nothing when mingled with the golden happiness of knowing that safety, liberty, and peace had been obtained after so fearful a struggle! Could Theodore gaze upon the lovely and beloved form of the sweet Dalmatian girl, and know how dreadful a fate might have befallen her, without feeling that life itself would have been a poor sacrifice to save her from such a doom? Could Ildica behold her lover, and recall the moments when last she saw him surrounded by fierce foes, and determined to die, that he might give her a chance of liberty, without feeling that a seven years' absence was but a cheap price for the life and safety of so noble, so devoted a being?

To part — to part perhaps for seven long solitary years—would, in happier days, have seemed a fate too bitter for endurance; but now the dark and fearful images from which that lot stood forth, made it look bright and smiling. The hour of horror and danger had passed by, despair had given way; and though fear still lived, yet hope, hope, was the victor for the time.

Their words were few but sweet, and they

were uninterrupted ; for the Huns, after the youth's wounds were dressed, pointed out to them some shady trees as a place to repose, and left them unrestrained, and almost unwatched. The barbarians knew well that the whole land around was in their king's possession, and feared not that any one could escape. The words of the captives, I have said, were few, but still those words were not unimportant, for they went to regulate the future fate of all. Each promised, when occasion served, to give tidings of their health and prospects, hopes and wishes, to a mutual relation in Rome, the noble Julius Lentulus, and each unloaded the mind to the other of every feeling which, in a moment such as that, the heart could experience — of every thought which the memory could recall.

As they thus sat and conversed, the slaves and attendants who had been captured with them crept gradually nearer and nearer, not yet comprehending fully the situation in which they were placed ; feeling themselves to be prisoners, and yet marvelling that their limbs remained untied, after such a bold effort to

escape, when they had been bound with leathern thongs before. Nearly one half, however, of the freedmen were absent; and painful sensations passed through the hearts of Theodore and Flavia, when they looked around, and missed some old familiar face; but neither spoke their feelings on this point to the other. As the sun passed the meridian, however, two or three Huns from time to time came riding down the road, driving before them, with their short spears, several of the absent attendants; and while the day went on, a considerable part of the baggage, whereof Flavia's company had been pillaged on their first capture, was brought back, without a word of explanation, and piled up round the trees underneath which she sat. Strange is it and unaccountable how the heart of man, which despises many a mighty warning, draws auguries for its hopes and fears from the pettiest occurrences that befall us in our course through life. When Flavia, and Ildica, and Theodore saw the litters, and chairs, and chariots, and bales of goods restored, and laid down in silence, a well-pleased smile beamed upon the

face of each ; not that either thought at that moment of comfort or convenience, or of all the little luxuries which the glass of civilisation magnifies into necessities ; but that each one thence drew a renewed assurance that the barbarian monarch, into whose hands they had fallen, however fierce and blood-thirsty he might have shown himself to others, at all events meant well and kindly towards them.

Towards the third hour after noon, food rudely cooked, and a beverage peculiar to the people of Dacia, was set before them ; and Edicon, sitting down to meat with them, pressed them to their meal, using the Latin tongue as purely as if it had been his own. He spoke of the empire of the Huns, of their might, their conquests, and their innumerable hordes ; he spoke even of Bleda, the brother of the King, and monarch of one part of the nation : but the name of Attila he pronounced not ; and when it was mentioned by Theodore he turned quickly to some other theme.

The sun had lost much of its heat by the time the meal was concluded ; and shortly

after a Hunnish horseman came down the road with fiery speed, and addressed a few quick words to Edicon.

That chief instantly turned and addressed Flavia. "Tricornium and Singidunum have fallen," he said, "and the way is clear before you. It is the will of the King that you commence your journey."

Flavia gazed upon Theodore, and Theodore upon those he loved; and the bright drops clustered in the dark eyes of Ildica, like dew in the half-closed leaves of the morning. Eudochia, too, hung upon her brother's neck, and Ammian grasped his hand; but still the son of Flavia, with wilder and less regulated feelings than the rest, could not yet understand or appreciate the grief of Theodore at that moment of parting. "Would I were you, Theodore!" he exclaimed. "Gladly, would I see the country and manners of these wild Huns; and oh, if I had a father's murder to avenge as you have, I would march on with that brave and mighty Attila, and smite the tyrant, Theodosius, on his throne."

“ Could it be without the ruin of my country,” replied Theodore ; “ but, alas, Ammian, that cannot be. Weep not, dear Ildica ! Sorrow not, my mother, that for a time you must leave me here. Let us remember our condition a few hours ago, and be thankful to God that it is as it is even now. Far safer, too, are you under the guidance and protection of these powerful barbarians, than if, unaided and unguarded, we had attempted to penetrate into Noricum : far safer am I left here, with those who have spared me even when my sword was drawn against them, than if I were attempting to guide you through strange lands that I know not, and barbarian people who hate us for our very civilisation. I trust implicitly to the word of Attila. He has promised us his favour and protection, and I fear not.”

“ Thou judgest rightly, Roman,” joined in Edicon, who still stood by. “ The word of Attila, whether for good or bad, has never yet been broken. His sentence is irreversible, his mind unchangeable. Fear nothing for the safety of your friends. Two hundred of our

bravest warriors guard them to Singidunum, whence a tribe of the Heruli, with a messenger from the King, convey them onward to their destination. They are safe wherever they go, for Attila has promised them protection; and is not Attila lord of the earth?"

Still Ildica clung to him, still Flavia gazed upon him with wistful affection; and the heart of Theodore, while they prepared once more for their journey, swelled with feelings too painful for utterance. Weakened with loss of blood, wearied with terrible exertion, and forced to part for long, dim, uncertain years from those whom alone he loved on earth, his manly fortitude wavered, but the presence of the Huns and the pride of a Roman sustained him. He could not bear that barbarians should see him weep; and though he held them one by one to his bosom in the warm embrace of passionate affection—though he spoke to the very slaves and freedmen with the tenderness of old and fond regard—though he looked upon each familiar face and long remembered feature with the clinging earnestness of love—yet he mastered

the emotions of his bosom, and saw them prepared to go without a tear moistening his eye. One last kiss, one long dear embrace, and Theodore turned away. Then came the sound of many feet, the neighing of horses, the cries of barbarian voices in the tone of command, the rustling and the rush of a moving crowd. Gradually the noise became less, the tongues sounded more faintly, the tramp of feet subsided into a lower and a lower murmur, and Theodore, looking round, found himself left alone, amidst a small party of the Huns, with a feeling of deep desolation at his heart, such as he had never known before.

CHAP. XIII.

THE DESOLATION.

A LONG deep sigh was all that Theodore would now give to the pain of parting. It was over, finished and endured! and he stood there, calm but grave, prepared for the long cold lapse of the next seven years. Oh, sad and sorrowful is it, more melancholy, if not more painful, than any other state of human being — fertile as existence is in woes and miseries — when over the summer and the sunshiny days of early youth are brought the premature storms of manhood, the hurricane of angry passions, or the deep and settled clouds of disappointment and despair! Oh, sad and sorrowful is it, when the half-open flower of the heart is broken off by the rude footstep of adverse fate ere it has time to expand into beauty! Oh, sad and sorrowful is it, when by the rough hand of circumstance the

fresh bloom is brushed from the fruit ere it be ripe !

Yet such was the fate of Theodore. Endowed with ardent feelings, strong passions, powerful energies both of mind and body, he had been called, while those feelings were in their first freshness, while those passions were in their early fervour, ere those energies had been strengthened by time or instructed by experience, to mingle with scenes, and take part in events, which few even of the mightiest and most mature minds of accomplished manhood could pass through, without bearing away the indelible stains left by feelings blighted, or the rude scars inflicted by evil passions. He had loved, and he had been beloved. He had tasted once of the nectar cup of the gods, which, when pressed by a pure lip, instils into the heart a spirit of immortality — and his lip had pressed it purely. Then had been called forth the exertion of that great attribute of manhood, the power of protecting, aiding, directing weaker beings in moments of terror and danger. Then came the mingling of that most

bitter draught, when grief and indignation are all that are offered to allay the thirst of a lip burning for revenge. Then came the ignominy of flight from an enemy alike hated and despised ; then the temptation conquered, to pamper vengeance by treason ; and then the mighty struggle where life was played for as a dicer's stake, and every energy of heart and brain was called into fierce activity, when human blood was spilt, and mortal being extinguished by his hand, to save from death, or worse than death, those he most loved on earth. And there he now stood, that wayward fated being, around whom within the last month so many lightnings had played, left alone amidst men with whom he had no community of feeling.

Those hours of agony and excitement had indeed made him a man before his time, and well, well might they take the bloom off his young heart ; yet though the syren voice of expectation might have lost part of its sweetness, though the chord which once vibrated to every joy might possess no longer its elastic tone ; though there was the grey shade

of doubt mingling with every bright colour which went to paint the future, and the enchanter could charm no more; still there was within his bosom, in his love for Ildica, a sweet source of unpolluted happiness, a well of youthful feelings undefiled, a fountain of bright clear waters, where wearied hope might come and drink and be refreshed. As he stood there in his loneliness, the value of that spring of secret enjoyment was displayed in all its brightness. He knew, he felt, that there was his treasure; and, with that support and conscious innocence alone, he prepared to face the future be it what it might.

The rapid process of thought had ran over in a few minutes all the varied particulars of his situation, the much of gloomy and dark, and the small but intense spot of guiding light; and ere the few Huns who remained with him showed any disposition to move, he himself turned towards their leader, and demanded what was to ensue.

“Are you able to sit a horse?” demanded Edicon, gazing on his features still pale with loss of blood.

“ I am,” replied Theodore, “ if the journey be not long.”

“ Then we must follow the King,” replied Edicon; “ but I have his commands to make the stations suit your capability. There is your sword,” he continued, giving him the weapon which had dropped from his hand, when the blow of Arderic had for the time disabled his right arm. “ You are to be treated in no way as a bondman.”

“ Keep it for me,” replied Theodore, putting it aside with the back of his hand; “ I will never go armed into my native land, with the enemies of my country.”

Edicon laughed aloud. “ Is there any thing else,” he demanded, “ that your fancy would have? I am ordered to humour thee to the utmost.”

“ There was one faithful freedman,” said Theodore, “ whom I saw not with the rest who departed just now. I would gladly hear of his fate: I left him with the horses on the hill.”

“ What! a giant?” demanded Edicon. “ I saw such an one contending like a madman with

our whole army. If it be of him you speak, most probably he is dead. I saw him fall beneath a blow which would have slain a bull. At all events, he is in the hands of Attila the King; for I heard him bid his people see to the brave African. Is there aught else?"

"I would fain," said Theodore, with a sigh, "I would fain recover the horse I rode. It was my father's charger; but I fear that it is vain, for I left it upon the hill."

"What! the black horse with the white star on his forehead?" demanded Edicon.

"The same," answered Theodore, with some surprise. "Have you seen him?"

"I saw him with you on the other side of the Danube, some four days ago," replied Edicon, "when Attila came down from the interior to meet you."

"To meet me!" exclaimed Theodore with a faint smile, "he could not come to meet me; for I crossed the Danube by accident, not from any long conceived purpose."

"So it might be," answered the chief, "and yet the King knew that you were coming, and

went down to meet you. Do you not believe, that there are men who see the coming events as clearly as we see the past? But it matters not," he added; "we left the tribe of Vultingours upon the hill. Perchance the horse may have fallen into their hands; if so, thou shalt have him."

He then spoke a few words in their own tongue to some of the Huns near, two of whom instantly sprang upon their horses, and galloped up the hill. While they were gone, Theodore and Edicon lay down in the shade upon the grass; and the young Roman endeavoured to induce his companion to pursue to some clearer point of explanation the vague hints which had been given, regarding his first meeting with Attila: but the wily barbarian was not to be led onward beyond the precise line by which he chose to bound his communication; and as soon as Theodore attempted to gain farther information, he started up, and busied himself in giving orders to the wild warriors around him.

In a few minutes the two Huns returned,

leading down at a quick pace the horse of the young Roman, which, snorting and rearing, resisted the unfamiliar hands by which he was guided. In a moment, however, the voice of his master rendered him tame and docile as a lamb; and Theodore could perceive, by the smiles and gestures of the barbarians, whose affection for, and command over, their own horses were even then proverbial, that he had risen highly in their esteem by the love and obedience which the noble beast displayed towards him.

When at length all was prepared, he mounted, though with much pain and difficulty from his wounds; but when once on his horse's back he experienced no farther inconvenience, except from weakness; and riding side by side with Edicon, he proceeded slowly on the same track which Attila and his troops had previously taken.

A little farther to the east, the woods again swept down to the very banks, seeming to present an impervious barrier against their advance in that direction; but still the Scythian horsemen rode on direct towards the forest, and separ-

ating on the very edge, each took his path by himself, winding along with extraordinary skill and dexterity, and keeping up their communication with each other by shrill sharp cries. They had apparently left the direction taken by Attila and his myriads: for the grass of the forest bore no trace of having been trodden down by the feet of those innumerable horsemen; and the green boughs on either side, clad in the refreshing garmenture of the early year, neither scorched by the summer's sun, nor withered by the autumn's wind, were unbroken and undisturbed. With slow and heavy wing rose up the feathered tenants of the wood, on the passage of strangers through those spots of which they had held solitary possession for so many years: the beasts started away from their path, almost under the horses' feet; and every thing indicated that calm tranquillity had reigned there for many a year, while the civilised world beyond had been torn by faction, turbulence, and war.

For nearly three miles the branch of the great Dacian forest which they were now

traversing continued unbroken, but at the end of that distance it again suddenly ceased, and issuing out upon a wide savanna, the little band of Huns reunited, and rode rapidly on. Another wood succeeded, but of less extent, and bearing evident traces, in many parts, of the destroying axe. It, too, was soon crossed; and when Theodore had again reached its extreme limit, another scene more gloomy, more painful, more terrible, broke upon his eye.

It was a cultivated land laid desolate! The corn, just losing its fresh green and touched with the golden hand of summer, was beaten down, and trodden into the very ground from which it grew; the fences and partitions were swept away, and the scattered remnants thereof, mingled with the produce which they were intended to protect, spread wide over the trampled and ruined country. The huts and cottages of a lowly but industrious population were seen around; but the roof had fallen in, and the blackened and smouldering rafters told the tale of destruction but too well. In the midst of the field lay a husbandman with a javelin wound

in his throat, and at the door of one of the cottages, stretched across that threshold which her feet had so often passed with joy and gladness, was the body of a young mother, with her golden hair streaming on the ground, her white arms extended motionless above her head, now tranquil in death, but telling still the tale of agonised emotion past, of supplication urged in vain, and unanswered appeals unto mysterious Heaven: and there, beside her, seeking with plaintive cries its wonted food, crept on towards her bosom her infant child, its little hands dabbling in the stream of gore that welled from the fond loved home of infancy, the dear maternal breast, now for ever cold and feelingless.

“ Oh God, the child ! ” cried Theodore, as they rode by.

Edicon gazed on it with a stern dark brow. “ There will be many such,” he said, and it was all his reply.

The young Roman’s heart swelled within him with the choking agony of fruitless indignation. He could do nought to succour, to

save, or to defend ; and bending down his eyes upon the arching neck of his proud charger, he strove not to see the many miseries of the land through which he passed. He could not shut his eyes to all, however. Every now and then the horse would recoil from a corpse stretched across his way. Every now and then the crashing fall of some burning cottage or Roman watch-tower, which were thick upon the road towards Viminacium, would make him start and look up, and behold new traces of ruin, slaughter, and desolation.

They passed by a hamlet where once many happy hearths had gathered round a small Christian church ; but the hearths were strewed with the rafters that had covered them ; the voice of the pastor and the hearts of the congregation were now still in death ; the church was void, its walls smoking, its pavements stained with blood, and its altar profaned ; and silence reigned equally, where the merry laugh and the gay song had rejoiced in the blessings of God, and where the voice of supplication or of gratitude had been raised to him in prayer or adoration.

They passed by a villa built in the graceful and the mighty times of Trajan, while the name of Rome was awful over all the earth ; but its halls and vestibules, its courts and gardens, were strewn with its fragments of works of art, and blackened with the fire which had destroyed its fair proportions.

Oh how glad was Theodore, when the grey coming on of twilight gave him the hope that night would soon shut out from his weary eyes the sight of such scenes of horror and devastation. But, alas ! even when darkness spread over the whole sky, the earth beneath — as he rode along, across the high grounds which there sweep down to the Danube — seemed glowing in a thousand spots with the lurid light of wide spread conflagration ; and Theodore beheld the destiny of his native land. Fire consumed each dwelling's roof-tree, and blood drowned out the ashes.

At length, at the bottom of the hills, where a small wood skirted one of the little rivers they had to cross, they came suddenly upon a number of fires, round which were seated some thousands of the barbarians. On the approach

of Edicon and his party, numbers of them started up, and quitting the loud rude merry-making in which they were engaged, gathered around the new comers, with wild gestures and quick vociferous tongues, talking, laughing, shouting, and screaming, while the fitful gleams of the fire displayed, in strong, unpleasant light and shade, their strange attire and harsh, repulsive countenances. Food of various kinds and in great abundance was set before Theodore and those who escorted him; but the young Roman felt no power to eat, and only quenched the burning of his lip, while he strove to drown remembrance of his griefs, in two full cups of wine.

“ We must on with the first light to-morrow morning,” said Edicon, “ and therefore it were better for you to take what sleep you can, though, perhaps, being a Roman, you cannot find slumber on such a couch as nature provided for man, and under such a tent as the starry sky.”

“ Sleep!” cried Theodore, “ sleep! Do you expect me to sleep after such a day as this?

Such sleep, however, as I can gain may as well be taken here as any where else," and wrapping his mantle round his head he cast himself down near one of the fires. For repose he sought not, for he neither hoped nor expected to find it, but he sought to shut out from his sight the fierce forms and savage merriment of those who had just devastated his country. With his eyes closed, and his mantle round his head, he saw them not, it is true, but still the wild peals of barbarian laughter rang in his ears, as they caroused around the fires; still imagination called up to his view the rude, ill-favoured countenances of the Huns; still memory presented to his fevered brain all the sad and painful sights which he had beheld during the day.

Thus passed by the greater part of the night; for, even when the Huns, giving themselves up to slumber, left silence to recover her empire over the scene from which their rude revels had banished her, bitter remembrance haunted the young Roman still, and drove far away from his troubled breast that soft and soothing

guest which visits so unwillingly the couch of pain or woe. About an hour before dawn, exhaustion, however, conquered thought; and when Edicon roused him to proceed, he was sleeping, if the name of sleep could be applied to that dull, unrefreshing want of consciousness into which he had fallen for the time. He started up, however, ready to go on, ay, and willing; for although he could hope to find but little better or fairer in the things before him, yet every scene in which he was placed was, for the time, so hateful to him, that it was a relief and consolation even to change.

The road lay still by the side of the Danube; but, after leaving their night's resting-place, it was evident that they were coming fast upon the great host of Attila himself. Multitudes of small waggons covered the way. Thousands of stragling parties were seen in every direction; and at length, after riding on for about two hours, they came in sight of the towers of a city, rising up from the banks of the river. At the same moment, as they stood upon the hill above it, a shout came up to the ear so loud,

so fierce, so demoniacal, that it seemed to Theodore that the very fiends of hell had burst forth to mingle with the dark innumerable multitudes that he beheld whirling round that devoted town, like the waves of some mighty vortex in the stormy oceans of the north.

Another and another yell succeeded; and as Edicon still led on down the hill, screams of anguish could be distinguished mixing with the shout, and fire might be seen bursting forth from various parts of the city.

“ Viminacium is taken ! ” said the Hunnish leader : “ we shall find the King in the market-place ; ride close by me, and let us on.”

CHAP. XIV.

THE CAPTURED CITY.

IN one dark, close rushing stream the Huns were pouring into Viminacium, when Theodore, with unutterable agony of heart, approached the gates with those who held him a prisoner. It was an hour in which he could full well have died with scarcely a regret, for every sight and every sound around him spoke nothing but despair.

A few words from his conductor brought the barbarians who accompanied them pressing round the young Roman, so as to keep him distinct from all the multitude which had followed Attila to his first actual conquest in the Roman territory. But so dense, so rapid, was that living torrent, that after they had once entered the gates no one could move except in the same onward course; and, knee

pressed against knee, horse jostling horse, forward they rushed, while nothing could be seen in the dark long street but an ocean of human heads, except where the flames burst forth from dwellings, palaces, and temples, and formed a fiery canopy above them.

To see beneath the horses' feet was not possible ; but every now and then some dreadful indications, on which it were needless to dwell, showed Theodore that his charger's feet were passing over a pile of dead ; and still, amidst the clang and rush of those wild horsemen, burst forth from other parts of the city, the same long, piercing, awful shrieks, which told that the work of massacre had not yet ceased within those ill-starred walls. Wherever, too, a street, branching to either side, gave a momentary view of what was passing beyond, groups of struggling forms were seen, with heaps of corpses, falling houses, and masterless horses galloping hither and thither, and rolling clouds of smoke writhing in dark masses amidst the building.

Still, however, Edicon pursued his way

straight on, though at every turning some body of the Huns quitted the onward path, bent on plunder or on bloodshed. At length the way opened out into the forum, whose wide space was covered with scattered groups of the barbarian host, whirling here and there, in obedience to commands emanating from a group who had forced their horses up the steps leading to the temple of Mars.

Here, in the forum, the Roman legionaries had made their last stand; and here, thick and many, lay the bodies of those slain by hands that had never learned to spare. Here, too, dismounted from their horses, and stripping the yet warm dead of their rich arms and vestments, were thousands of blood-stained groups of the conquerors; and here, penned up, and dying man by man, was the last determined cohort which resisted the barbarian force. Even at that very moment, as Edicon was forcing his way onward, that last lingering spark of resistance was extinguished; for Theodore could see one Hunnish horseman, followed by several others, urge his horse fiercely down the steep

steps of the temple, and plunge into the midst of the multitude which was pressing round the last brave men of Viminacium. A loud shout burst from the barbarians as that horseman hurled himself forward like a thunderbolt against the front of the cohort. Its line, which had remained firm even in despair, was rent in a moment, as an oak that has withstood the winds is rent by the lightning, and the Roman helmets disappeared in the dark mass of the Huns. Again that same horseman separated himself from the multitude, rode slowly back towards the temple, and urged his horse once more up the steep and slippery steps. Towards him Edicon pursued his way; and, as they came near, Theodore perceived that it was, indeed, towards him their journey had been directed.

There, advanced before the rest, Attila sate gazing from his battle horse's back over the awful scene before his eyes; while near him an equestrian statue of Trajan, with his calm thoughtful features, and a bronze group of a lion tearing a bull, contrasted strangely, and harmonised

well with the fierce and heated aspect of the stern Hun, as, covered with blood and dust, he rolled his flashing dark eyes over that terrible scene of massacre, fire, and desolation.

“Oh,” cried Theodore, as they came near the steps, “oh, beseech him to sheath the sword, and spare the unresisting!” and as he spoke he naturally urged on his horse, to plead the cause of his miserable countrymen with one who had shown himself, in his own case, not insensible to pity.

But Edicon caught his bridle quickly, exclaiming, “Speak to him not! Speak to him not, if you value life! See you not that the mighty spirit of war is upon him. Speak to a hungry lion tasting the first blood! Plead with the tiger for its prey! But cross not Attila in his hour of battle and victory! Bleda, his brother, might hear you, and spare you at the time to slay you for his pleasure after; but were you to cross Attila now, he might strike dead the man whom to-morrow he would cherish as a son.”

At that moment, however, the eye of the

monarch lighted on the garb of Theodore. "A Roman!" he cried, "a Roman before my eyes! Smite him to the ground! Give his heart to the vultures!"

The youth understood not his words, which were spoken in the Hunnish tongue, but the fierce gestures of the barbarian king were enough; and at the same moment an hundred spears were raised around to drink the Roman's blood.

"Let them do their will," he said, calmly, "let them do their will. Who would love life after such sights as these?"

But Edicon interposed: "Hold!" he cried, to those so prompt to obey in any work of blood — "Hold! he is the King's friend. Attila knows him not. Oh King!" he continued, raising his voice, "thou hast promised this youth protection: wilt thou break thy promise?"

Attila rolled his eyes over the whole group in silence; and Edicon, with those who surrounded him, well knowing that the fierce and eager mood of their lord would pass away, retired slowly from

his sight, leading Theodore with them. No tranquil spot, however, no place of refuge or repose, did that wide city now contain. Plunder was still going on, though slaughter, insatiable still, even when gorging upon thousands, had exhausted nearly all, but only halted for want of food. Some wretched woman, indeed, or some helpless child, was dragged every now and then from its ineffectual hiding-place, and a solitary scream, or a dying groan, marked the new victim. But the work of butchery was now well nigh complete; and conflagration, spreading rapidly in every part, threatened to consume the barbarian victors themselves, in the burning city which they had captured and destroyed.

A small open space, near what was called Trajan's Gate, at length afforded a place of repose to Edicon and his party; and there, following the example of the Huns, Theodore alighted from his horse, and sitting down upon one of the massy stone steps before a dwelling which had once belonged to some rich banker, and had been one of the first to be plundered

by the barbarians, he covered his eyes with his hands, and tried to shut out even from memory the horrors which he had just beheld.

In vain — it was in vain ! Confused, countless, terrible, images and feelings of destruction and despair rushed through his burning brain, and his indignant heart, and drove him well nigh to madness. At length two or three wild notes of some barbarian trumpet, loud, long, and melancholy, sounded through the streets, and were heard above the general roar of the Hunnish multitudes, coming from different quarters of the city. Edicon sprang up, and mounted his horse ; and, seeing Theodore remain in the same attitude of despair, he exclaimed, “ Up, up, we must away ! It is dangerous to linger.”

Theodore rose slowly ; and though the curling flames which at once struck his eye, flickering above all the buildings around, together with the shower of sparks and flakes of fire, which were falling incessantly from the dense and lurid clouds of smoke above, showed that the words of Edicon were true, and that the

warning voice of the trumpet had only been sounded in time, yet slow and heavily did the young Roman rise, as if he would willingly have remained to die in the flames of that vast holocaust to the barbarian god of warfare. In vain the Huns urged him to haste: he gazed upon them dark and gloomily, as if the bitterness of death itself were passed; and they, with all their power, could do no more.

With strange and unusual gentleness for one of so fierce and uncontrollable a nation, Edicon endeavoured to persuade him to follow them from the captured city. He offered no violence, he used no rude command; but after every other argument had failed to quicken the movements of the young Roman, he added, as if he could have divined the only chord which — left strung and resonant, where so many were broken — could still vibrate to the touch, “Remember that there are others in the world to whom your life is dear; beings kind, beautiful, and beloved, who may need the protection of your arm, the consolation of your affection, and the shelter of your breast.”

The tears rose in Theodore's eyes: but the thrilling life of human hopes and fears was once more kindled from among the dead ashes of despair; and, springing on his horse, he followed wherever they would.

Wild, and terrible, and extraordinary was the scene of confusion and disarray which followed, while the Huns, some fast and eagerly, some lingering with their appetite for plunder still unsated, poured forth from the gates of the burning city. Order and ranks were there none. Tumult and confusion, loud cries, wild laughter, shouts of triumph, and barbarous songs, dark masses whirling hither and thither, horses, which had lost their masters, seeking them familiarly through the crowd, the rush of innumerable multitudes, and the mighty hum of congregated myriads, formed all that was seen and heard over the wide green fields, which surrounded what a few hours before had been Viminacium — except when, loud and slow, surmounting every other noise, were heard the long melancholy notes of the barbarian trumpet, calling the conquerors from the work of spoil and desolation.

Sweeping round in a semicircle upon the declivity of the hills, which domineered the city, the host of Attila was at length gathered together, at the end of about two hours after Theodore had seen the barbarian monarch in the forum. The youth had sat apart upon the edge of the hill, gloomily gazing upon the dim multitudes, as they covered and struggled up the intervening space between the walls and the spot where he was placed. The same party of Huns which had always hitherto accompanied him, more to protect than to detain him, remained with him still, except, indeed, Edicon, who had left him for the time. At length, however, he re-appeared, and, sitting down beside the youth, addressed him kindly.

“The King,” he said, “has asked for you. The fierce cloud of strife has passed away from his heart, and the sun will shine upon those that approach him now. Let us draw near. Lo! yonder he stands, where you see the crowd upon that high knoll. The warriors are going to bring their booty before him. If thou hast any boon to ask at his hands, ask it now.”

Theodore rose, and followed on foot, though there was a fevered weariness in his blood, a confused giddiness in his brain, which prevented him from clearly comprehending, or, indeed, from taking any interest in the words that were addressed to him. Even when he had approached the presence of him on whom his whole fate now depended, the objects passed before him as if in some unreal pageant, wherein he had no feelings engaged, and by which curiosity and admiration were hardly excited.

There sat Attila on horseback, and beside him a taller and a younger chieftain, with keen sharp eyes, and a low fierce brow. In his countenance there might be more of cunning, but there was less of power and intellect than in that of Attila; and, as Edicon caught the eye of the young stranger wandering over his form, he whispered, "That is Bleda, the brother of the King."

Theodore paused, where his companion paused, at no great distance from the spot where the two leaders stood, and looked on,

while the whole host passed in long line before the kings and their immediate followers, casting down in a pile all the rich and costly plunder which had been acquired in the first capture of a Roman city. How often, in the course of the succeeding months, was that scene to be repeated ! There were the chased and jewelled cups and chalices which had graced the merry banquet, and poured the libation of hope or gratitude ; there the sacred vessels of the church ; there the gems and ornaments torn from the neck of beauty, and from the violated limbs of the tender, the gentle, and the beloved. There was poured out the miser's long accumulated store ; there the early gift of young affection ; there the inestimable product of ancient art ; there the shining mass, only prized for its intrinsic value. Each object there cast down recorded some deed of profanation, either of sacred civil order, or of holy piety, or of the sweet sanctity of calm domestic life : each spoke trumpet-tongued against the horrid, the desolating, trade of war ; the honoured, lauded,

and rewarded curse, parent of murder, violence, and wrong.

Theodore scarcely remarked the division of the spoil, though he perceived that no voice, no, not even that of Bleda, was raised against the stern but just allotment made by Attila. Each soldier received his share ; and each seemed to hear with reverence the words of his leader, and to gaze with awe upon the countenance of him whose steps seemed destined to crush thrones into the dust, and on whose breath hung the fate of nations and of empires.

When the division was over, Attila turned his eyes upon Theodore. " Bid the Roman approach," he said ; and the youth advanced to the spot where he sat on the same horse which had borne him through the sacking of the city. His countenance, however, was now mild and calm ; and the tone in which he addressed to Theodore some simple words of greeting was kind and father-like. Bleda said nothing ; but he rolled his fierce eyes over the form of the young stranger, and his whole countenance

spoke the unmitigated hate which he felt towards every thing that bore the Roman name.

Theodore listened to the words of the monarch calmly; and then at once replied, "Oh King! I have a boon to ask at thy hands; I beseech thee grant it unto me."

"Speak," said Attila, in the tongue of the Alani; but Bleda muttered in the same language, "Dash his brains out with an axe! that were the best boon to give him."

Attila's brow darkened; but, without noticing farther than by that heavy frown his brother's words, he bade the youth proceed.

"Thou art mighty, oh King!" said Theodore, "alas! too mighty; and, it may be, that, ere thou receivest defeat from the Roman arms (Attila smiled), many such a city as this that thou hast to day destroyed may fall before thee ——"

"Many shall fall!" interrupted Attila: "I will tread upon their towers from Margus to Byzantium. I will mow the land as with a scythe: I will shake the armies from before my path, as a lion shakes off the morning dew from

his mane. The fortified cities will I lay low, and the open villages I will burn, and my horses shall eat up the grass of the whole land. There shall be no green thing, and no beautiful thing, and no living thing, left throughout the country, unless speedy compensation for the wrongs done to me and to my people avert the wrath, and turn away the storm: — but yet, what wouldst thou?”

“ This, oh King !” replied Theodore ; “ my eye cannot witness the desolation of my native land. Either my heart will cease to beat, or my brain will turn, if I behold more of such scenes as those which I have this day witnessed. I am thine to do with as thou pleasest, and I will keep the promise I have made; but I do beseech thee, send me afar from such sights. Let me go into thine own country ; and I swear by all that I hold sacred to remain there tranquilly till thou returnest.”

“ I know not how that may be,” replied the King : “ thy life is dear to me, youth ; and were a Roman now to show himself in the land of the Huns, without protection and support, ex-

cept, indeed, as a captive, the stream of his days would soon fall into the great gulf of death."

"If thou takest me on," cried Theodore, "to witness the murder of my fellow-countrymen, the ruin and devastation of my native land, thou slayest me by a worse death than any thy people can inflict."

"Well, thou shalt go back," replied Attila; "but I will send people with thee, to protect thee in my name, till thou art known and in safety in the land. I cannot spare thee, Edicon; but he shall choose others who can speak some of the languages thou knowest: ours thou wilt soon learn. Follow me, until this night be over: to-morrow thou shalt depart. See to his repose, Edicon, and find him where-withal to cover him from the night air. These Romans are not, as we are, familiar with the elements."

Edicon smiled; and Theodore felt the scorn which had fallen upon his nation; but he replied not, for the reproach was too true; and, retiring from the presence of Attila, he felt his heart relieved at the certainty of being no

longer forced to contemplate with his own eyes all the horrors that awaited his native land.

In their eager and fiery course towards the destruction of the Roman empire, the Huns knew no pause, lingered for no repose. Ere noon, Viminacium was a heap of ashes ; ere two hours more had passed, the division of their plunder had taken place ; and ere another had gone by, the unwearied myriads were again upon their way, to repeat the same scenes of slaughter and destruction. At nightfall they halted. The innumerable small waggons, which followed them with a celerity quite marvellous, formed at once the ramparts of their principal camp, and the abode of such as were affected by some touch of softer manners. In the centre of the camp was raised the standard of the King, the rude black eagle crowned* ; and round it, at the distance of about a hundred cubits, was drawn an inner circle of waggons ; but in the clear and starry nights

* It was called Astur, and is supposed to have been the same as the tributary bird of the Tartars named the Schongar.

of summer no tent or awning covered the head of Attila; and beneath that victorious banner, which he carried unchecked from Caucasus to Gaul, he lay stretched upon the hide of a wild bull, which his own hand had slain.

Round about the great camp were a number of smaller enclosures; some appropriated to different tribes and nations, who followed the multitude of the Huns in their career of victory and pillage; some assigned to various friends and officers of the great monarch himself. Nevertheless the warrior horsemen of that innumerable host did not confine themselves, where they feared no attack, to the circle of their encampment; but, spreading over the plain around, spent the early hours of the night in feasting and revelry.

Theodore, with Edicon, who showed for him on all occasions kindness and consideration, which was little to be expected from one of so barbarous a race, followed full half an hour behind the general march of the army, in order to avoid those sights of occasional vio-

lence and cruelty which were sure to take place, even in the thinly peopled part of the country which they now traversed. When they reached the spot, therefore, on which Attila had fixed for his encampment, night had already fallen ; and for several miles around were to be seen blazing up a countless number of fires, with scarcely fifty yards from the one to the other, and with a circle of those wild soldiers surrounding and carousing about each. Little was the attention which they paid to the new comers, as they rode through the midst of them ; and Edicon, by frequently stopping to speak to those he knew, gave his companion a full insight into the habits of that roving people. We must not pause thereon, for this is not intended for a book of description ; and yet it was a wild, strange scene that he beheld, full of matter for disgust and sorrow, and yet not without interest either. There all the vices of a savage state were displayed ; while some peculiar virtues, and some of those strong enthusiasms, which, though not virtues, find chords of sympathy in every noble heart, broke

forth from time to time, and shed a lustre over the mingled whole.

At some of the fires, reclining or sitting in grotesque or picturesque attitudes, lay groups of the wild Scythians, in their strange but striking dresses, drinking deep of various liquors, which they had either compounded or plundered ; and, in the eyes of many, the fiery gleam of intemperance was already shining, while with hoarse laughter, and savage gesticulation, they detailed the deeds of the day, or mocked the agonies of their victims. Round other fires, again, gaming with the same eagerness, the same loud words and fierce anxieties, so often to be found disgracing the capitals of civilised lands, might be observed other bodies of barbarians moved by another class of passions. Then, again, farther on, gazing with eager eyes, or listening with acute ears, and answering with bursts of thoughtless merriment, sat other bodies of the Huns, around some buffoon or jester*, in whose tale, or whose joke, or whose antic contortions,

* We find from all records that the Huns were peculiarly fond of gaming and of buffoons.

their whole thoughts seemed to be engaged, forgetful of the bloody yesterday, unmindful of the bloody morrow. Farther, still, rose up the voice of song ; and, in notes not unmelodious, some native minstrel sung of love and war ; praised the beauties of some honoured fair, or extolled the valour of some mighty chief. There, too, around him might be seen the dark countenances of those swarthy children of the north, moved by all the deep emotions, which his song touched through the fine chords of association. There the youth leaned back ; and, as he listened to the name of love, or heard the glowing words which painted some fair creation of the singer's mind, memory turned towards his native home, affection held up before his eyes the image of the one beloved, and his heart beat with eager palpitations at the gentler and the sweeter thoughts poured into his rude breast. There, too, might be seen the elder and the sterner soldier, who when the song took up the tale of war, and told of things achieved by glorious courage, lands conquered, thrones acquired, and everlasting glory won, would half

start from his grassy bed, and, resting on his arm, gaze with flashing eyes, and stirred up enthusiasms, upon the singer, and, with fond anticipations of the future, promise his own heart the glorious meed of deeds recorded in a song like that. Oh, beautiful, universal nature! noble feelings! touching harmonies of the musical heart of man! why, why, amongst you must be thrown so many discords to bring out your sweetness? Why can we not have on earth the perfect harmony? where, from the lowest to the highest, from the most solemn to the gayest note, all may find place, and rise in one grand, all-comprising anthem to the God of all?

CHAP. XV.

THE PERIL AND ESCAPE.

It was to one of those detached circles, which we have described as separated from the general encampment, that Edicon led the way, after speaking with several of the chiefs, as they passed along. It had been apparently reserved for himself and those who followed him, for the enclosure was nearly vacant, except where before the entrance of a tall but curiously formed tent, which had probably been taken in war from some eastern nation, blazed up a large and cheerful fire. Around were seated about a dozen of the Huns, not less wild and fierce in the expression of their faces than the rest of their nation; and yet there was something about their dress and general appearance which struck Theodore as more familiar to his eye. As he approached, one of them rose and ad-

dressed him in the Latin language, and welcomed him to his tent with great purity of speech and accent ; and oh, how sweet and musical did those sounds appear, after the strange harsh tongues which had lately rung in his ear, amidst scenes of ruin, bloodshed, and strife !

Sweet, sweet, indeed, it was, but overpowering. He felt the tears ready to gush from his eyes : a word would have made them overflow ; and, without speaking, he entered the tent to which the man had pointed. It contained nothing in the outer chamber of the two into which it was divided by a curtain but a lighted lamp upon a small table ; and in the inner a bed, piled up of skins, with a single wooden settle. It had an air, however, of civilisation and comfort ; and how often is it in this life that the air has more influence upon our happiness than even the reality ? We are the slaves of association ; and, as such, truly but children of a larger growth, to whom the paint and tinsel of appearances render the toy valuable, whatever be its intrinsic worth.

Theodore cared little for the comfort, and

thought Roman civilisation had fallen into effeminacy, and yet the sight of that tent, like the sound of Roman words, sent a thrill through his heart, and made him happier. Edicon saw his emotion, and seemed to understand its cause, at least in part.

“ You are surprised,” he said, “ to hear the Latin tongue ; but you will be more so to know, that there are several thousands in our host who can use it fluently.”

“ I have heard,” replied Theodore, “ when I was in Rome, that Ætius the great General in Gaul has several bodies of Huns amongst his mercenaries.”*

“ Ay, and Valentinian also,” rejoined Edicon. “ Not two years since full ten thousand of our nation were engaged in defence of the Western Empire. We are too near neighbours to the East to have such friendly commerce with her. Besides, Theodosius is unworthy the defence of

* Not only was such the case, but in various contentions in the empire, hired bodies of the Huns were frequently found fighting on both sides, and doing their duty faithfully.

brave men, a mere weak coward, a flimsy knave, whose only means of proving his manhood is by murdering with hired steel the only honest and noble men left to save his empire."

Edicon struck the chord aright; and Theodore's heart replied, though his lips were silent. "These men," continued the Hunnish chief, pointing to the barbarians, who were again seated round the fire, and took but little notice either of Theodore or their newly arrived companions, who had followed him with Edicon — "These men have been chosen by the King himself, not because they speak thy language better than others in the camp, but because they are known as faithful and just. They will accompany thee back into our land, and though they go with regret, thou wilt find them true and trustworthy. Ten more will be added, whom thou mayest choose, either from amongst the Huns, who have lived with the Romans, or from amongst thy kinsmen the Alani."

"I will choose the Alani," answered Theodore quickly, and he observed, as he spoke, the brow of his companion contract, as if he were

offended — “ I will choose the Alani—not, noble Edicon,” he added, “ that I doubt or distrust the Huns, for to me they have been merciful, kind, and generous, whatever violence and cruelty they may have shown in dealing with my native land. But remember, that those I love the best, have gone to seek a refuge with the Alan tribes; and perchance, by having some of them near me I may learn, as I go, tidings which will cheer and console me to hear.”

“ Not only as you go,” answered Edicon with a smile, “ but afterwards also; for those who are now chosen to accompany you are not only directed to be your guard by the way, but are also given you—not as servants to a lord, but as followers to a leader, and will obey you in all things, as far as our customs permit, so long as you remain with us.”

“ It is strange,” answered Theodore thoughtfully; “ your King, so harsh and fierce towards others, is so gentle and merciful to me—considers my wants, provides for my security, and cares for my comfort as if he were a father.”

“Receive it all with gratitude,” replied Edicon, “and he may prove a father to you. Nor must you think Attila harsh and fierce towards any, except in the hour of battle, when the spirit of war is upon him, and with the powers of a god he claims the attribute of vengeance. No! Though grave and stern, he is just and humane towards his people. Determined in his purposes, inflexible in his judgments, his purposes towards those who obey him are mild, his judgments even against himself are equitable. It is only the traitor amongst his own people, the aggressor amongst foreign nations, that he treats with rigour.”

“Think me not ungrateful,” said Theodore; “I meant not to accuse thy monarch; and while I felt thankful for the tenderness he hath shown to me and mine — thankful for life and liberty preserved, and for the safety of those who are dearer to me than life itself — I have been forced to marvel that he has dealt so different a measure to me and to others. There is something strange in it.”

“There may be so,” replied Edicon; “but

think you there are no such things as sudden intimations, given us from heaven, of those with whom our fate is to be linked for good or evil ? think you that those prepossessions for or against, which we feel so suddenly, so unaccountably, in rare and extraordinary cases, are mere fancies, passing whims, which have no reference to after events ?”

Theodore made no reply, for he remembered well his own peculiar feelings when he had first seen that powerful monarch with whom his own destiny had since been so completely mingled. He remembered it well, but he answered not, for the Hun seemed to have seen his feelings, or at least divined them ; and at length Edicon went on. “ Such may have been the prepossession of Attila towards you ; and we know, or at least believe, that the feelings I have mentioned are given us by the gods to let us know our friends and enemies. Does not the horse tremble when the unseen lion is near ? do not the bleatings of the sheep warn the shepherd to watch even while the wolf is yet afar off ?”

He paused a moment for reply, and then

added; " But I will leave you to repose, and yet, ere you seek sleep, take some food; for your eyes are haggard and hollow, your cheek burning as if this tent were a furnace, and you have neither drunk mead nor broken bread during the whole day. Bid a slave bring food," he continued, speaking to those without; and then taking from one of his own followers the sword which Theodore had left in his hands, he laid it down on the small table by the lamp, saying, " You are now turning to another land. Keep your weapon; for whether you need it or not, it is always well to be prepared. Add to it a javelin and a bow, for as you go through our country you may strike a stag or a wild bull, and gain honours in the chase which we hold next to war. I will now leave you, and see you to-morrow ere you depart."

Thus saying, his conductor left him, and a frightful negro slave, precious in the eyes of the Huns from the hideousness of his face and figure, brought him cooked meat and thin cakes of flour, with a strong drink composed of honey. Theodore tried to eat, but only few were the

mouthfuls he could swallow, though the meat was not unsavoury. He tried, too, to drink, but there was a burning heat in his throat and mouth; and the sweet liquor was revolting to his taste.

“ I will bring wine,” said the negro slave in tolerable Greek; “ I am a present from Attila the King to his Roman son, and he is to be henceforth my lord. Wilt thou have wine? for it shall go hard but with mine own wit and Attila’s name to bear me out, I will find you as pure wine in the Hunnish camp as ever you tasted in the city of Constantine.”

“ I would rather have pure water,” answered Theodore; “ I have a painful thirst upon me; and heart and tongue feel burning as if with fire.”

The slave sprang away, and returned in a few moments with both water and wine, and mingling them together, Theodore drank with delight which he had not known for long.

“ I thank thee, friend,” he said, giving his hand to the slave in gratitude for the blessed draught: “ it is exquisite, and I thank thee.”

The slave took his hand and kissed it, gazing intently on his face ; and then seeing by the calm and grateful sincerity of the young Roman's look, that no scorn existed in his bosom towards that deformed and frightful shape which crouched at his feet, he sprang up saying, " I have deceived you ; but I will not betray you. I am not sent by Attila, but by Bleda, his brother. Beware of him ! Roman, beware of him ! "

" I have no cause to fear him," answered Theodore : " I have done nought to injure him."

The slave shook his head mournfully. " Are we only injured by those whom we have injured?" he demanded. " Alas ! were it so, I should not be what I am. But I must speed hence, and not talk with thee too long, lest he hear that I have done so, and think I have betrayed him."

" But tell me what is thy name?" demanded Theodore. " I have nought to give thee as a reward, but some day, perchance, I may have, and I will not fail."

“ My name is Zercon,” answered the slave ;
“ and I am the crooked and mutilated jester of
Bleda, the brother of Attila. Thou hast looked
upon me with eyes of feeling and compas-
sion, and I am rewarded enough ; but I will
serve thee farther still.”

Thus saying, he quitted the tent, and drew
the external curtain closely after him. Theo-
dore paused to think over what he had heard ;
but as he reflected, he could find in all the wide
range of probability no cause why Bleda should
seek to injure him — “ There must be some
mistake,” he thought ; and, overpowered with
weariness and exhaustion, he laid his sword
close beside the bed of skins, and casting him-
self down, endeavoured to forget his cares in
slumber. Restless, unhappy, fevered, long and
painfully he tossed upon that lowly couch,
courting in vain the blessed influence which
opens for us, for a while, those gates of care,
that shut us in the dreary prison of ourself.
The faintly burning lamp stood beside him ; and
by its pale light, as his eye roved round, the dark
hangings of the tent became peopled with the

spectres of imagination. His father passed before him, as he last had seen him at Byzantium, but his garments were spotted and dabbled with blood; and his countenance was pale with the ashy hue of death. Then came Flavia with a crown upon her head, and a shroud about her person. Then he beheld Eudochia struggling in the arms of a fierce and eager form, and then Ildica glided across the scene, clothed in bridal robes, and with her left hand clasped in that of a wild shadowy shape, which led her slowly forward, while in her right she carried a naked dagger, dropping as she went large goutts of crimson blood.

He knew, he felt, that it was all delusion, but yet he could not banish the swarming fancies that disturbed his brain, and even deceived the organ of sight itself. He closed his eyes, and resolutely turned his face to the wall of the tent, near which he lay, and employed himself in listening to the various sounds which rose up from the myriads spread over that wide plain. Although there were some noises, which might be distinguished from

the rest, an occasional burst of laughter, the loud and measured tones of some singer or reciter, or the wild notes of various rude instruments of music, yet the general buzz of all the many voices far and near came upon his ear with a drowsy and lulling hum, which gradually brought on an inclination to sleep. As time passed, too, the louder and more distinct sounds died away, and the whole subsided into a low and whispering rustle, which was like the noise of the sea upon a pebbly shore, only that it wanted the regular intermission of the successive waves. Forgetfulness fell upon him ; but in a moment he woke up again with a quick start, gazed round to see where he was, felt the load of care pressed back upon memory, and hastened again to close his eyes, and cast it off once more.

He slept again, and this time more profoundly than the last, though his breathing was short and thick, and his limbs tossed to and fro. The lamp burned more and more dimly. The sounds in the camp fell into silence, only broken now and then by the wild neighing of a war horse.

At length, a little before midnight, the curtain, which separated the tent into two chambers, and which he had let drop when he lay down to rest, trembled as with a slight wind — was slowly moved — was drawn back; and a tall, powerful form took a step within, and let it quietly fall again. Two more paces brought him to the side of the couch, where the young Roman lay, and with arms folded on his chest, the giant-like intruder gazed upon the sleeping youth, and then looked cautiously round the tent. When he had done so twice, he blew out the lamp, and drawing over his tall form the mantle which Theodore had cast off, he crouched himself down at the foot of his bed. All was still and silent, but the quick, heavy breathing of the Roman youth, and the rustling of his clothes, as he turned from time to time upon his uneasy couch. In less than half an hour, however, the curtain again moved, and a listening head was advanced within it.

“The lamp has gone out,” said a whispering voice, speaking to some one in the outer cham-

ber, in the lowest tone that the human tongue can assume : “ lift up the curtain of the door, lest I miss my blow. ”

The curtain was lifted up, the inner one pushed back, and in streamed the pale, calm, moonlight, showing Bleda, the brother of Attila, partly advanced within the inner chamber. He took another step forward, and listened, grasping tight the shining blade, which he carried in his hand. Another step brought him within arm's length of the Roman's couch, and his hand was raised to strike, when, bounding like a lion on his prey, up started from his master's feet Cremera, the Arab freedman, and seized the murderer in his gigantic grasp.

An instant struggle took place ; but the Hun was no match for his antagonist, who cast him down upon the ground, shaken, and nearly stunned. Another barbarian, however, rushed in sword in hand from the outer tent ; but Theodore was now upon his feet, and springing across the prostrate body of Bleda, interposed between the armed Hun and his gallant freedman. Another barbarian ap-

peared at the door of the tent, and how the struggle might have gone, who shall say? but then, there came a cry of Attila the King! Attila the King! and with a torch before him, the dark monarch of the Huns advanced slowly into the tent. He gazed round upon the faces of all present, with that stern, calm, unmoved look, which never changed but in the fury of the battle.

Bleda, who had risen, answered his brother's glance with a look of fierce and fiery impatience, and planted his foot upon his sword, which had fallen from his hand in the struggle, as if he feared that some one should snatch it up. The companion who had followed him, with his naked blade still in his hand, stood trembling before the face of Attila, with a pale and changing countenance.

To Bleda the great monarch said nothing; but slowly drawing his heavy sword from the sheath, he raised it over his head, and at a single blow cleft through the skull of his brother's follower, till the trenchant blade stopped at his teeth and jaws.

Bleda sprang forward with wrath flaming from his eyes. "How darest thou," he cried, "slay my servant?"

"How darest thou," said Attila in a voice of thunder, "lift thy hand against my friend? Thinkest thou that Attila can be deceived? Thinkest thou that Attila will not punish? Bleda, Bleda! Once, twice, thrice, have I warned thee! The measure is full! See that it run not over. I am neither blind to thine ambition nor thy purposes. Beware while it is yet time, and be yet my brother."

"Why what have I to fear from thee," demanded Bleda haughtily; "am I not a king as thou art? Did not the same father beget us, the same mother bear us? Was not the dominion left to us equally divided? What art thou, that thou shouldest judge me? Am I not a king as thou art?"

"Our portion was once equal," answered Attila; "but though I have not robbed thee of one tribe, or of one charger, what are my dominions now and thine? I have added nation unto

nation, and kingdom unto kingdom, whilst thou hast held thine own only beneath the protection of thy brother's shield. Bleda, I have trod upon the necks of fifteen kings, each greater than thou art. Force me not to tread upon thine. Once more, beware! I tell thee, the cup is full! Thou knowest Attila; now get thee gone, and leave me."

Bleda paused a moment, as if he would fain have given voice to the rage that swelled within his heart. But there was a strange and overwhelming power in his brother's presence, which even he, who had struggled with him from infancy up to manhood, could not resist. He remained silent then, not finding words to answer, and taking up his sword, he shook it with a bent brow at Cremera, and quitted the tent.

"Take away yon carrion, and give it to the vultures," said Attila, pointing to the body of him he had slain.—"Brave man," he continued, turning to Cremera, "well hast thou done what I gave thee in charge—thou hast saved thy master's life; now leave us, but wait with

the men without, to whom I gave the task of guarding him from evil. Bid them be more cautious for the future, and tell them, that the presence of the King's brother—nay, of his son himself—can never more be an excuse to Attila for failing in obedience unto him. For the present, they are pardoned ; get ye gone.”

Cremera retired ; and Attila motioning his own attendants to withdraw, made them drop the curtain of the tent, and then sat down upon the couch of skins. Theodore stood for a moment by his side, but the King made him be seated, calling him by the gentle name of my son.

“ Thou art surprised,” he said, “ to see thy faithful freedman here amongst us ; but when I found thee first, sleeping in the watch-tower beyond the Danube, he sat between thee and me with his spear in his hand, glaring upon me as I have seen in Eastern lands the lioness glare upon the hunters, who would take her young ; and I said to mine own heart, ‘ If this youth should ever want a faithful guard, here is

one who would spill his own heart's blood, rather than a drop of his lord's should flow.' When I followed thee from Margus, too, I found him almost alone, struggling with some of my warriors who had gone on before, in defence of the women, for whom, as well as for thyself, I had promised thine uncle my protection. He would not yield till a heavy blow on the head had stunned him, but I gave him in charge to those who are skilled in the secret virtue of herbs and flowers, with commands to bring him after me, and to cure him. They promised me he should be soon well; and when I heard of thy danger, and that he had recovered, I sent him hither to guard thee, till I could come myself, not choosing to oppose any of my own nation to the hand of my brother; and I knew that that brother would do the deed he meditated with his own arm."

"Then I have once more to thank thee, mighty Attila, for life," said Theodore; "to thank thee, the enemy of my native land, the destroyer of my countrymen."

“ Not so,” replied the monarch : “ I have once saved thy life, I grant, when thou wert in the power of Arderic ; but for the deed of to-night thou owest me nothing. I promised thee protection, and had I not given it when I could, I should have been myself thy murderer. But to-morrow thou seekest to depart and leave me. Is it not so ?”

“ It is,” answered Theodore ; “ not that I am ungrateful for thy favours, oh King ! nor insensible to the distinction which thou makest between me and others of my race ; but the scenes I have witnessed, the grief and bitterness of heart that I have endured, since the morning sun of yesterday, would soon terminate my existence, were they often to be renewed. Did your nation wage warfare like a civilised people, I might endure though I might grieve ; but now the sight of the utter extermination and devastation which thy tribes inflict wherever they pass is death, is worse than death to me likewise.”

Attila fixed his eyes upon the ground, and

remained for a moment silent :—" I will reason with thee, my son," he said at length ; " for, though I disdain the art of the idle and subtle fools, who wrangle, as I hear, for an empty word in the schools of thy capital, yet Attila is not without reasons for any thing he does, and when needful, can give those reasons, if it so please him. Thou talkest of the hostilities of civilised nations, and speakest with anger and fear of our more just and reasonable dealings in our warfare. But we make war upon our enemies, not upon our friends. We either go to subdue and bring under our dominion other nations, or to avenge ourselves upon a foreign foe. If the first be our object, and resistance is offered to us, how foolish to leave our enemies the means of resisting us with success ? how weak to spare men who have done all they could to slay us, or women and children, by which the race of our adversaries may be kept up and increased ? No ; it behoves us to smite with the arrow and the sword, so long as there is any power of resistance in the land, and never sheathe the blade, or unstring

the bow, till we are undisputed masters of the whole race and region. Then again, if we go for vengeance, what vengeance do we gain by suffering our own warriors to be slain without slaying our enemies. The more that die, the more is vengeance satisfied, and if we purchase it with our own blood, we must drink the blood of our enemies. What you call civilised warfare is a mere folly, which protracts the attainment of the end it seeks, and often loses it altogether—which, instead of blazing like a bright fire, and consuming rapidly a small quantity of fuel, lingers long, and burns a thousand-fold as much. No no, my son, the most merciful warfare is that which is the shortest; and that in which no compassion is shown or asked, is always sure to be the soonest over. Nevertheless," continued Attila, "I seek not to make thee witness the ruin of thy native land, though, methinks, the destruction of thy father's murderer might well repay the sight; but thou shalt go hence. The men I have chosen to accompany thee are under thy command, and thou shalt have cattle, and

woods, and pasturage assigned thee from my own herds and lands ; ay, even gold shalt thou have, and, what is better, security and peace ; for whosoever lifts his hand against thee shall have Attila for his foe ; and now fare thee well, till we meet again on my return."

CHAP. XVI.

THE COUNTRY OF THE HUNS.

THEODORE was left alone once more, and weariness was more than ever upon him; but yet the busy untiring course of thought went on for long after he had again lain down to rest. Thought's insidious enemy, sleep, at length crept upon him; but ere calm forgetfulness had complete dominion, Cremera once more stole into the tent, and again lay down at his feet. The lamp, however, had been lighted by the followers of the monarch; and Theodore, recognising the form of his faithful attendant, merely spoke a few words of thanks and greeting, and let his heavy eyelids fall.

Broad daylight was shining through the chinks of the tent when he awoke; and Cremera was sitting in the outer chamber,

polishing with a knife a strong ashen staff, to which he had fitted the iron head of a spear. Theodore saw that the day must be far advanced, and rising, he offered prayers and thanks to God ; and then while speaking many kindly words to the freedman, he advanced and pushed back the loose hangings that closed the interior of the tent from the view of the outer world.

How changed was the scene which met his eye, from that which he had passed through on the preceding night ! The Huns were gone ; scarcely a vestige of them remained ; not a waggon, not a group was to be seen over all that wide plain, except where, before the door of the tent, ten or twelve of the Huns, and an equal number of the Alani, taller, stronger, and fairer to look upon than their dark companions, employed the vacant hours in packing a number of small and strangely assorted articles into two of the low waggons, which had formed part of the night's circle round the tent. The sun was not very far from its meridian, and Theodore saw that he must have slept long

and profoundly, but yet he was not refreshed. There was a weariness, a heaviness upon his limbs that he had never felt before, a burning heat upon his skin, that the cooler climate, in which he now was placed, could not have produced.

Nevertheless, he gladly prepared to depart, and bade the attendants, who had been assigned to him, make all things ready, while he went to bathe his feverish body in a small stream that his eye caught glistening on, at a short distance, upon its way to join the rushing waters of the Danube. The cool wave, however, proved no refreshment, and only caused a chilly shudder to pass over his limbs, succeeded quickly by the same heat as before. On his return, he found food prepared, but he could not eat; and though his lip loathed the wine they offered, he drank a deep draught from the horn of an urus, for the sake of gaining that temporary strength of which he felt himself to stand in need.

His own horse, fresh as the early morning, from a night of repose, stood near, but the

horses of the barbarians were still straying over the plain. A shrill long whistle, however, brought them in a moment to their master's sides, and small grooming did the rude riders of the Dacian wilds bestow upon their swift but rugged beasts. The tent was by this time struck, and placed upon the waggons; and Theodore, with one of the Huns beside him to guide him as he went, led the way onward, towards that strange land, which seemed thenceforward destined to be his home for many a long year. Of his guide he asked various questions, and was answered fluently in his own language; but at length Cremera, who followed, pointed towards the towers of a far distant city, saying, "Is not that Margus?"

"It is," answered the Hun. "We can go thither if thou wilt," he continued, addressing Theodore. "We can repose there to-morrow night. It is now a city belonging to Attila the King."

"No, no," replied Theodore, with many a painful feeling at the very thought finding expression on his countenance — "No, no, not in

the city for a thousand worlds ; rather let us lodge in the open field."

"Thou art wise, young chief," replied the Hun. "Cities are hateful places: Attila loves them not, any more than thou dost ; and though Margus is his, he will not keep it long, but will either sell it back to the Romans or destroy it."

Theodore replied not ; and they rode on, till at length towards even-tide they came near the banks of the Danube, and after half an hour's riding within sight of the river, halted for the night on a spot near the old Roman way from Moesia into Dacia. Theodore was fatigued, but yet he could not rest ; and while they were engaged in setting up his tent, he wandered forward to drink of the great river.

It was a sweet, bright, tranquil afternoon. The sun was just dipping beneath the wood-covered hills, upon the opposite bank of the river, but the air was still full of his light ; and the forests and mountains, the soft green slopes, the blue sky, and the light passing cloud, were mirrored in the swift waters of

the mighty stream, as it flowed on towards the ocean. The air, too, was calm; and silence hung above the world, except when the laughing note of the woodpecker, or the melody of the thrush, broke the silence for a moment, to render it more calm and sweet. Theodore gazed up the stream, and beheld afar gigantic masses of masonry, rifted and broken, projecting from either bank, while here and there, from the broad sea-like bosom of the Danube, rose up massy piers and wood work, the fragments of some vast fabric swept away.

It was evidently the famous bridge of 'Trajan that stood before him, just as the destroying hand of his envious successor had left it; and as Theodore gazed upon the remnants of that stupendous work, as they stood in the clear light and shade of evening, he could not but meditate upon the change of dynasties, the vanity of human hopes, the fruitlessness of earthly endeavours, and all the many and melancholy themes on which poet and philosopher have sung and moralised, hoping even while they did so, for that earthly immortality, which they

knew and proved to be a bubble. There before his eyes stood one of the greatest works of one of the greatest men that the human race in all its vast succession of beings, in all its complexity of characters, in all its variety of qualities, has ever produced, from the creation till to-day ; and yet a mean follower, unable to compete with him in intellect, in feeling, in effort, or in success, had possessed the power to sweep away from off the earth that majestic monument of a grand and creative mind, to cast down what the good and wise had raised up, to destroy what the noble and energetic had created.

“ Oh wonderful frailty of man’s most lasting works !” thought the young Roman ; “ that nothing can give them certain existence, no not for a century. That which the earthquake spares, the hand of war and violence pulls down ; that which hostile armies have respected, the mean envy of inferior genius will destroy. Alas ! when we look around, and think of the work of but a few short lustres upon man’s noblest efforts, and his brightest productions, well, well may we ask, What is lasting upon earth ?”

He paused — “Yes, yes !” he thought again ; “Virtue is lasting ! virtue is immortal even here ! Rarely as it is seen, often as it is counterfeited, shunning publicity, hating pomp, virtue, indestructible like gold, even in the fire of time, and amidst the trial of circumstances, comes out pure, and passes on uninjured, accumulating slowly, but brightly, in the treasures of the past, and forming an inexhaustible store of example and encouragement for all who choose to take it. Yes, yes, virtue *is* lasting ! One may produce, and another may destroy ; but Trajan shall be remembered, when Hadrian is forgotten or condemned.”

Theodore, as the confidence in some great principle of stability returned to his heart, set his foot more firmly upon the earth, which, to his imagination, had seemed crumbling beneath him like a pile of dust and ashes, while he had only remembered how brief, how transitory, is the existence of the noblest fabrics that it bears.

He would fain have gone on to examine

more nearly the mighty fragments of what had once been the celebrated bridge of Trajan, but the ruins were further than they seemed: he was weary and languid; and ever and anon urged by the burning thirst upon him, he paused to drink again of the waters of the Danube. At length he gave up his purpose and returned to the tent, where the Huns were broiling, on a wood fire, a large fish which they had caught in the neighbouring river. At the very sight of food a sickening disgust came over the young Roman; but his faithful *Cremera* pressed him so anxiously to eat, that he forced himself to swallow a few mouthfuls. But it was in vain: he could not go on; and soon retiring to his tent, he endeavoured to find repose.

No sounds disturbed his rest, for nothing was to be heard but the rushing of the Danube, and the sighing of the wind through the tall trees. No human being had been seen through all that morning's journey; no voice of salutation had welcomed them as they passed, showing, too well, how desolate the land had been made; and after the youth's attendants had laid themselves

down to sleep, not a tone but one solitary scream from some flitting bird of night broke the silence of the world around : and yet Theodore courted slumber in vain. He tossed his weary limbs upon the couch of skins which had again become his bed, and counted the heavy minutes from night till morning. Frequently through all the violent heat that burned in his whole frame a cold chilly shudder would pass over him, and he felt that the hand of sickness was upon him.

Nevertheless, he started up with the dawn, bent with feverish eagerness upon pursuing his journey as quickly as possible, while yet the last efforts of his remaining strength could be exerted to oppose the overpowering weight that pressed him down. Looking out from the tent, he saw the Huns and the Alani already busy in preparing for departure ; and in a few minutes, one who seemed to have been despatched to seek for a means of transport, came back to say, that the raft had already come down to the shore. Cremera gazed anxiously on the changed and ashy countenance

of his lord ; but he spoke not, and led the war-horse, who knew his hand better than that of any of the Huns, down to the bank of the river. A raft, such as had borne Theodore across once before, was waiting with some of the rude boatmen of the Danube, and in two voyages the whole party, which accompanied the young Roman, was born across and landed on the other side of the river.

Dacia was now before his steps ; and although he could not but feel a chilly coldness at the thought, that he had passed, perhaps for ever, the boundary of his native land, had left behind him, for an unlimited space of years, all those scenes and objects linked to the brightest memories of his heart, had entered upon a course, where all was new and strange, where much was dark, and doubtful, and much distinctly painful ; and that he had nothing in prospect, at the very best, but a long, dull lapse of years, amongst nations inferior to his own in every point of intellect, and every art of social life ; yet there was a feeling of joy broke across the gloom of such anticipations, when he re-

membered the sights of horror which he had just witnessed on the Roman frontier, and felt that he would be called to mingle in such scenes no more. The very feeling gave him new energy ; the morning air seemed to revive him ; and he spurred on with the rest through the wide forest that lay before their steps, and across which a grass-grown track afforded them a way into the interior of the country.

In less than three hours, at the rapid rate at which they travelled, they had crossed the belt of wood which for a considerable way bordered the Danube. Beyond that belt, stretched out a plain, which would have seemed interminable, had not the blue lines of some distant mountains, rising up against the far horizon, marked its boundary. Except where, here and there, was seen a line of forest ground, looking like a group of bushes, in the vast extent over which the eye could stretch, the whole plain seemed covered with long green grass waving like a mighty lake, as a light wind bent it to and fro in the morning sunshine.

There was something grand and expansive in the view, notwithstanding its vast monotony ; and as Theodore paused for a moment, and let his horse breathe upon the edge of the slight slope on which the forest ended, he gazed with some feelings of surprise and admiration upon the new world which was henceforth to be his habitation. That feeling again refreshed him ; but much need had he indeed of refreshment, and of any thing which could give even a momentary support to that strength which was failing fast under the pressure of fatigue and illness.

“ Let your horse pause for a moment and eat,” said the Hun, who rode by his side. “ We are a long way from a resting place ; under those woods is our first village.”

Theodore did as the other advised, but his heart grew faint at such a notification of the length of way ; for though he would not pause, nor yield, so long as any powers of life were left, yet he felt that the powers of life were waning, and that if he reached not soon some place,

where he could obtain refreshment and repose, he should never reach it at all, but sink of unwonted weariness by the way.

In a few minutes they again began their journey through the plain, riding up to their horses' chests in the long rich grass, which, though it proved no obstacle to the small quick horses of the Huns, impeded and irritated at every step the fiery charger which had carried the young Roman. In the mean while the summer sun got high, and poured its burning rays upon Theodore's unsheltered head: a white, filmy, and oppressive mist rose up from the moist plain, not thick enough to impede the sight, but tinging every object with a peculiar hue. For a long time nothing diversified the scene, nothing interrupted the monotony of their progress; but at length an immense bird sprang up almost from under their horses' feet, and spreading its wings, without rising from the ground, ran on with extraordinary speed before them.

“An ostrich! an ostrich!” cried Cremera, forgetting the distance between the spot where

he then stood and his own porphyry mountains;
“ an ostrich ! a young ostrich ! ”

But the Hun, who was by his side, paused for a moment without speaking, poised the javelin, he carried in his hand, and lanced it with a strong arm in the air. Falling with unerring aim, it struck the great bustard between the wings, and riding on, the Hun took it up, and slung it over his shoulders, saying, “ This will secure our evening meal.”

Still they rode on, and more and more terrible grew the lassitude of the Roman youth: the heat was overpowering; the way seemed interminable, and that distant line of wood, towards which their steps were bent, though appearing certainly to grow larger, yet was approached so slowly, that Theodore, as he gazed upon it, felt his heart grow faint with the despair of ever arriving at the calm shelter which he vainly hoped there to find. With his lip parched, with his eye glazed, with his cheek pale yet burning, and with his hands scarcely able to hold the reins, still he rode on, looking forward with an anxious, straining gaze upon

those woods, thinking they never would be reached. Wider and wider they stretched out before him. The plain on which he had seen them stand alone, like a group of bushes, when he had gazed on them from the distant heights, now seemed bounded by them entirely on that side. As he came nearer, he could distinguish the vast rolling masses of forest, the dark deep brakes, where glades or savannas intervened, and at length, while with his dim and dizzy sight he scanned eagerly the scene before him, he thought he could perceive some low wooden cottages crouching as if for shelter beneath the wide extended arms of the tall trees upon the edge. That sight again gave him a momentary impulse; he urged his horse on; he saw the cottages more distinctly; but, as with that last effort he attempted to reach them, strength, and hope, and thought, all gave way at once, and with just the consciousness of utter exhaustion, he fell fainting from his horse.

A lapse of time succeeded, over which Theodore's memory had no power. He had talked, he had suffered, he had raved, he had struggled,

during the interval, he had named names which those around him did not know, he had spoken a thousand things which they could not comprehend, while for fourteen days he had lain tossed between life and death, and tended by the hands of strangers. But of all that, he had no recollection, when at length reasoning consciousness had returned.

It was the evening of a sweet summer's day, when, opening his eyes, he looked around, and wondered where he was. There was a small chamber, lined with smooth and fragrant pine wood, from the cracks and crevices of which the fresh resin was yet oozing. On the walls hung, in fantastic garlands, many a barbarian instrument of war, spears and swords, the quiver of arrows and the unstrung bow, the buckler, the club, and the far-slaying sling. There, too, beneath, on stands and tables of wood, might be seen a number of strange idols, wild, unseemly shapes, such as a child might carve for sport out of a block of wood. Settles and tables were there, also, of the same plain material, but on some of them appeared objects of a more

valuable kind and a richer workmanship. There lay, even in abundance, gems and gold, bearing evident marks of cultivated taste, and skilful art: but there were two things, more sweet than any other could have been to Theodore's senses at that moment, which called all attention from every other object.

The first was the calm sweet breath of the summer evening, borne light and fragrant through the open window; the other was the sweet melodious voice of a woman singing.

He turned his eyes to where the singer sat, beside the bed on which he was stretched, and saw a girl of some seventeen years of age, with bright brown hair, worn not as Roman women wore it, but parted on the fair forehead, and thrust in clustering ringlets behind her ears. The face was very sweet and beautiful, and every thing would have been soft—perhaps too soft, for great interest—had it not been for the deep devoted blue eyes. They were somewhat darker in hue than the sky by day, but yet as they gazed forth from the long dark

lashes they looked like that same azure heaven at the moment when its colour is most deep, yet most pure, just ere the curtain of the night falls over its expanse. She saw the youth turn his eyes upon her; but thinking only that sleep had fled again from his still fevered brain, she recommenced the song she had been singing, while her small white hands continued to ply the light labour of the distaff. Theodore, however, could now hear and understand; and he listened with delight that cannot be told, while in the Alan tongue, the language of his own dear mother, she sang with a sweet, soft, rounded voice —

THE SONG OF SLEEP.

Come, gentle sleep, to the couch of the stranger,
 From thought's weary burden, oh give him relief!
 Take mem'ries of anguish and prospects of danger,
 The future's dull care, and the past's heavy grief!

Sweet friend of our childhood, thou strewest with flowers
 The pillow where infancy rests her calm head,
 When weary with sporting through long happy hours,
 With thee for her angel, she seeks the soft bed.

Coy visitant, come ! We prize thee more highly,
 In years more mature when we've tried the world's truth ;
 Why com'st thou so rarely ? why fly'st thou so shily ?
 Oh what thus estranges the friend of our youth ?

We've been false to thy friendship, despised thy caresses
 For pleasures we've left thee, and even for cares :
 The faithful, the tranquil, the humble, sleep blesses,
 But flies from the couch that one wild passion shares.

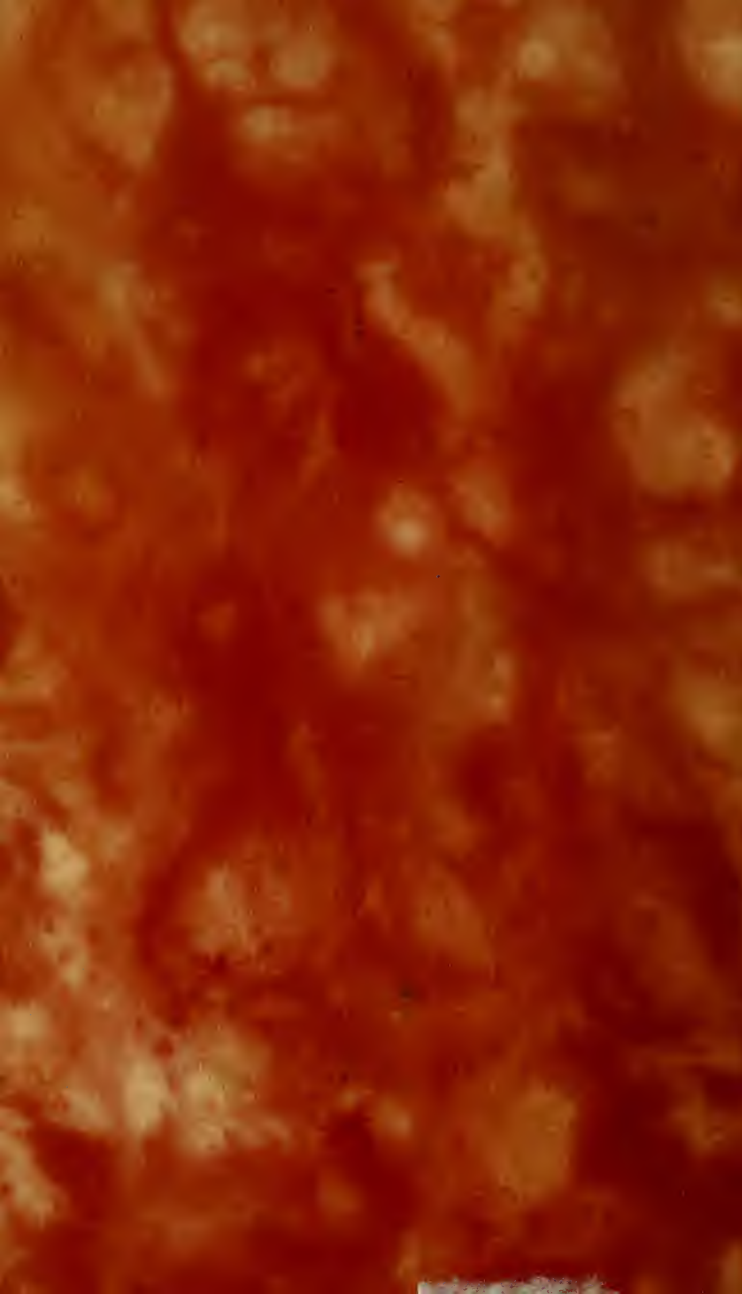
Yet, balm-giver, yet, for the sick and the weary,
 Thy merciful gifts we implore, as a boon ;
 Oh give us thine aid, on our way long and dreary —
 Aid, tardily valued, and lost all too soon !

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Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
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